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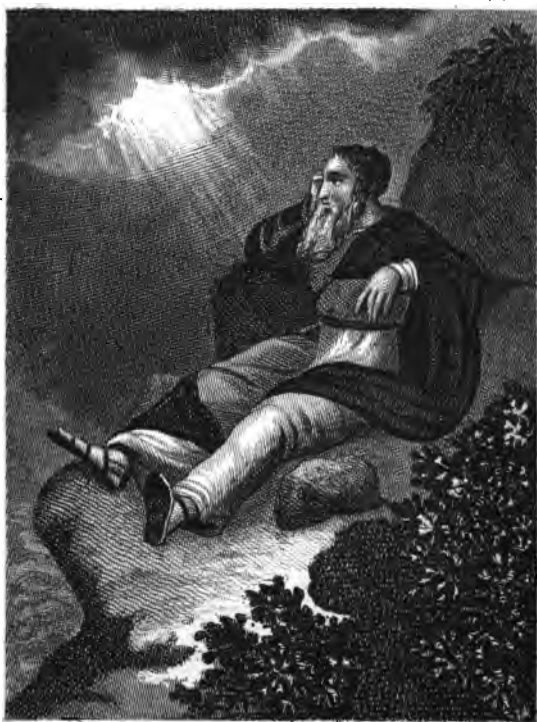
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48.1284.







*Sweet was the journey to the Sky,
The wonderous Prophet try'd,
"Climb up the mount," says God, "and die.
The Prophet climb'd and died.*

SCRIPTURE HISTORY;

WITH

THE LIVES OF THE APOSTLES,

&c.

BY E. MILLER.

DESIGNED FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF YOUTH

THE ORIGINAL EDITION,
ENLARGED AND IMPROVED.

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THE DEATH OF MOSES.

BEFORE CHRIST 1451 YEARS.

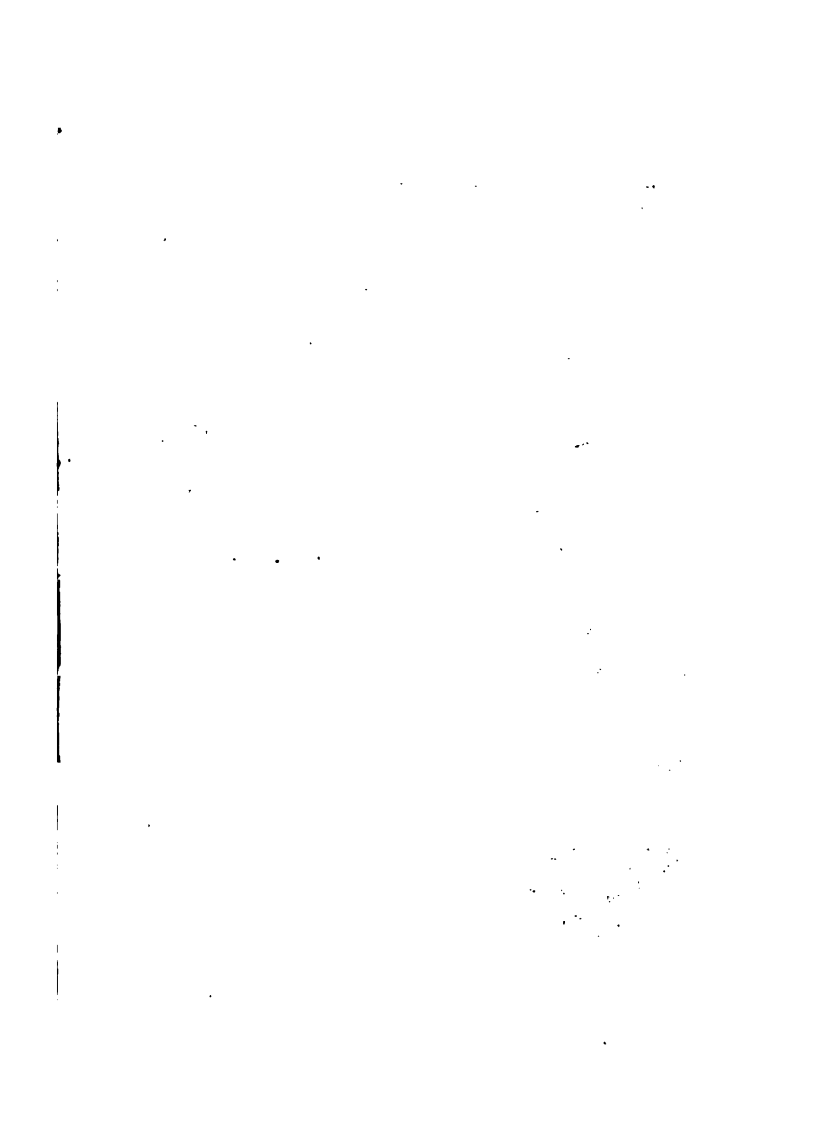
“What prophet, by the sacred breath inspir’d,
What friend of GOD ! with holy raptures fir’d,
Whose deathless name can equal glories share,
Or with my servant Moses can compare ?

HAVING taken his farewell of the people, and given them his parting blessing, Moses the servant of God, as directed by the Almighty, repairs to the top of the mount Nebo, which is called Pisgah, from whence he was favoured with a view of Canaan, into which he was not allowed to enter, because he had failed to honour God before the people, when bringing water out of the rock, (Numbers xx. 12.) which has been already noticed. No doubt Moses felt the punishment greatly, in being excluded the land of promise ; and it is left upon record to be an example to God’s people in all ages

of the world, not to sin against him, for he will not suffer iniquity to go unpunished, even in those who are very dear to him. Moses was indulged with the sight of Canaan just before his death, and thus God sometimes favours his people with very sweet views as regards heaven, the better Canaan above, just before he takes them home to their eternal rest. If it is so delightful to have a view of heaven, by faith, before we get there, O think what it will be when we arrive there, to see our God and Saviour as he is, and to be for ever with the Lord. But what unspeakable misery will be the lot of those who have been shown this happy land by the means of grace, but neglecting it, are allowed to perish even as it were within sight of it : may the Lord keep us unto his heavenly kingdom, for none other can. So Moses the servant of

the Lord died, and the children of Israel mourned for him thirty days. Thus it is that the best and most useful men must die when their appointed time comes. Moses had been a great blessing to the people, but they must now lose their kind friend ; and though they had often grieved and offended him, yet when taken away they lament and mourn his death in the plains of Moab thirty days. O may we be kept from slighting our mercies while they are within our reach, lest we have to lament them when too late, for such is often the case, especially as regards the things that belong to our eternal peace. There never was a prophet under the Old Testament dispensation like unto Moses : he was called to particular and difficult work, and the Lord qualified him accordingly ; he ruled among the people forty years, he was their companion in all their troubles, had often been their intercessor with God in the

hour of danger, and though exposed again and again to their unkindness, yet he bore with them to the end ; leaving an example to all in authority, how to bear with those placed under them. But though Moses was so great, the word of God reveals to us one much greater in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom Moses spoke, chapter xviii. 15, when he said, "*A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you.*" This is evident to relate to the Saviour of the world as in Acts iii. 22, and in Acts vii. 37. To this greater Prophet than Moses may God incline us to hearken ; with humble gratitude may we obey his commands ; may his love and favour be the greatest desire of our hearts ; may we trust our eternal salvation in his hands, and when he leads his people to their everlasting rest, may we be found among the happy number of "*just men made perfect.*"





*Soon to the King report was made,
That two young Israelites had stray'd;
And they, though come to view the land,
At Rahab's house were entertain'd*

RAHAB CONCEALS THE SPIES.

BEFORE CHRIST 1451 YEARS.

Two spies to neighbouring Jericho were sent,
The jealous king appriz'd of their intent,
With speed his guards to faithful Rahab sends,
But Rahab's house conceals her Hebrew friends.

MOSES left the Israelites encamped on the plain of Moab, when he died, near the river Jordan, over which they were to pass to enter the promised land. Before the death of Moses God had nominated Joshua as his successor, and Moses had charged him to be courageous: the important task devolved upon him to lead the people forward, and we find in the first chapter of Joshua, the encouragement which God gave him, and the success which he promised him—
“Moses my servant is dead: now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them

*As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee ;
I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."*

Happy are they whom the Lord condescends to employ in his service, and to favour with his blessing and presence. Joshua had long attended Moses, and while he ministered to him, had learned those duties which he was now called on to practise. It is profitable to keep company with good men ; as we may learn from their good example some useful lessons, whereby we may serve the cause of God in the world. Joshua had valiantly stood his ground when the spies brought up an evil report of Canaan ; and now he has the honour of conducting the people to that land ; thus it is, "*those that honour God, he will honour.*" (1 Sam. ii. 30.) Those who are decidedly on the Lord's side, and through his grace are enabled to stand against the opposition of Satan

and the world, have good reason to hope that he will employ such for his glory.

There is something very significant in the name of Joshua; the word means *a Saviour*; thus we may perceive there was always a type of the promised Saviour throughout the Old Testament. Moses was strikingly so in delivering the people out of Egyptian bondage; now Joshua was appointed to lead them into Canaan; and what we observe in both these characters, we behold united in the person of Christ; he not only delivers from the bondage of sin, which is worse than the captivity that Pharaoh inflicted, but he leads to a better Canaan than Joshua conducted them.

One of Joshua's first acts, was to send two men across Jordan to view Jericho, and bring him an account thereof; these men were directed by the providence of God to

Rahab, who kept a house for the refreshment of travellers. An account of these spies being entertained by her, soon reached the ears of the king of Jericho, who sent a message to her to deliver them up ; but she hid the men under some stalks of flax on the top of the house, and told the king's messengers that they were gone, and advised them to pursue after the spies. This was a falsehood, and is by no means to be considered as a precedent for our using deceit upon any occasion ; yet it proceeded from right motives in her, as she knew that God had given the Israelites the land of Canaan, she had heard of all that he had done for his people, and therefore she could not think of betraying them to their enemies ; but let us ever remember that God never requires us to utter falsehood, and that it is our bounden duty always to speak the truth.

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*Acroſs the deep their journey lay,
The deep divides to make them way;
Jordan beheld their march & fled,
With backward current to his head.*

THE ISRAELITES PASS JORDAN.

BEFORE CHRIST 1451 YEARS.

They saw the ransom'd flock come safely o'er,
And with glad shouts salute the welcome shore,
Twelve weighty stones from Jordan saw them take,
And signals of their wondrous passage make.

JOSHUA, on receiving a favourable report from the spies, whom he had sent out to view Jericho, was encouraged to go forward, for they had learned from Rahab, that the people of the land were afraid at the approach of the Israelites: accordingly Joshua rose early in the morning, and removed with all the host to the banks of Jordan; here they encamped a few days, not knowing as yet how they were to pass the river; at the end of three days a command was given them, that when they saw the ark of the Lord remove, and the priests going forward with it, they were to

follow; the ark was now to go before them, as the pillar of cloud and fire had hitherto done.

When the priests with the ark, reached the brink of the river, the stream stopped, and the waters which were coming down rose up in a heap, while the waters below went down to the sea. What rendered the miracle the greater was, that the river Jordan at this time was so swelled as to overflow its banks; this would have increased the difficulty to human performance, but with the Almighty, all things are possible; no obstacle can stand in his way, all must yield to his omnipotence. He had once led his people through the Red Sea; then the waters were as a wall on both sides, but now on one side only; thus God can not only accomplish his plans, but vary them according to his infinite wisdom. What can he not

do ? what will he not do for his people's good ? O may this mighty God be our God, may he guide us by his arm of strength and mercy all our life long !

The priests that carried the ark stood still in the river till all the people had passed over ; the ark which they carried was the token of the divine presence, and their remaining with that token on the dry ground was a security to the people that the waters should not return till they were all safe over. What a blessing it is to have the presence of God with us at all times, especially in the time of need, in the hour of danger !

When the people were all safe through the river, the Lord commanded Joshua to have twelve stones taken from the bottom thereof, to form a monument in remembrance of this wonderful miracle which he wrought for them, and other twelve stones were set

up in Jordan, to notify the place where the ark stood. It is well to keep in mind the mercies of God to us in our journey through life, and especially any signal instances of his providence which we may have met with.

The river Jordan is considered by some as a representation of death, through which we must pass before we can arrive at the heavenly Canaan ; but if God be present with us then, as his ark was with his people of old, we shall pass safely through, and arrive with triumphant joy on the opposite shore. The real Christian may exclaim in the words of king David, “ *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*” (Psalm xxiii. 4.)

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*The last day you seven times round shall go,
Then a long blast the trumpets blow:
With shouts the warriors shake the skies,
When flat the wall before them lies.*

THE CITY OF JERICHO TAKEN

BEFORE CHRIST 1451 YEARS.

Joshua cries, "your conquest Heaven assures;
Ascend! for the devoted town is yours;
Let Rahab live, but all the rest must die,
So loud their ripen'd sins for vengeance cry."

THE Israelites having crossed Jordan, the first place to which they were to lay siege was Jericho, a strongly fortified city, and garrisoned by men who were obstinately bent upon holding out against the besiegers; but neither the strength of the city, nor the courage of those that dwelt therein, could secure it from falling into the hands of the Lord's people; the Lord was pleased to give Joshua instructions how to obtain possession thereof

The men of war were to go round the city once a day, on six successive days, accompanied by seven priests carrying the ark,

and blowing seven trumpets of rams' horns; on the seventh day they were to go round the place seven times in the same manner, at the end of which times all the people were to shout, when the wall should fall down, and thus admit them in.

How insignificant and unlikely were these means to answer the end intended, so far as regarded human probability! but they were appointed by that God who can make use of the weakest instruments, and most improbable things, to produce the most important ends; by which he shows his mighty power, and at the same time tries the obedience and faith of his children. The people, we find, observed to do all that the Lord commanded, and at the appointed time they saw the wall of Jericho fall down, and entered into the city. This place, and all that was therein, was to be destroyed by

the command of the Almighty; not any living thing, nor any spoil, was to be spared; but the gold, silver, and all other vessels which could be purified by fire, were put into the treasury of the Lord in the tabernacle. It was dreadful to slay every living creature in the city, but it was righteous to order vengeance to be taken on the inhabitants, for they were sinners before God, and he chose to make his people the ministers of justice, and to punish their iniquities.

There was one exception to the general destruction, and that was Rahab and her household. When she hid the spies, and sent them away in safety, she made an agreement with them, to spare her life when they obtained possession of the place, (Josh. ii. 12, &c.) The promise was faithfully observed, for the two men that she saved were now appointed to secure her person and her

family ; and, it is added, "*she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day*," by which we find that this part of the history was written by Joshua while she was alive ; and it is evident from some other passages of the sacred scriptures, that she was married to a great man of the tribe of Judah, of whom, according to the flesh, Christ came.

From the example of Rahab, we learn that true repentance, even from the greatest sinners, is acceptable in the sight of God, for by it she saved herself and family from the dreadful fate of their companions in sin. In this general destruction the Lord could and did preserve those whom he had called by his grace. May we be found among his redeemed people ! then will his arm preserve us in time, and in the last great day, when dreadful ruin overwhelms his enemies, we shall be found eternally safe.



*To Achor's silent vale they go,
And heavy stones at Achan throw:
Himself & all his goods they burn,
Heap high the stones & then return.*

ACHAN STONED TO DEATH.**BEFORE CHRIST 1451 YEARS.**

The sacrilegious Achan steals
From God ; and God his crimes reveals ;
And execution then takes place
On Achan, and his wretched race.

JOSHUA having sent spies out, that he might know the strength of the city of Ai, the men returned with an account that it was but a little city, and would only require a small force to take it ; so Joshua sent but three thousand men on the expedition, when, alas ! they were beaten before the men of Ai, who cut off thirty-six of the Israelites. This defeat caused great distress among the people, who calculated upon overcoming every foe that should oppose their possession of the land that God had promised to give them, and of which they naturally concluded the conquest of

Jericho was an earnest: but was there not a cause for this repulse? Surely there was; and when Joshua mourned before the Lord, because of the reverse they had experienced, the Almighty told him there was sin in the camp, which had produced the effects which he now deplored; this was the reason why Israel could not stand before the enemy, nor would they prosper till it was removed. Sin has brought every misery into the world that is found among mankind: it is what God hates, and, if not put away, will be the means of delivering us over eternally to our spiritual enemy, the devil.

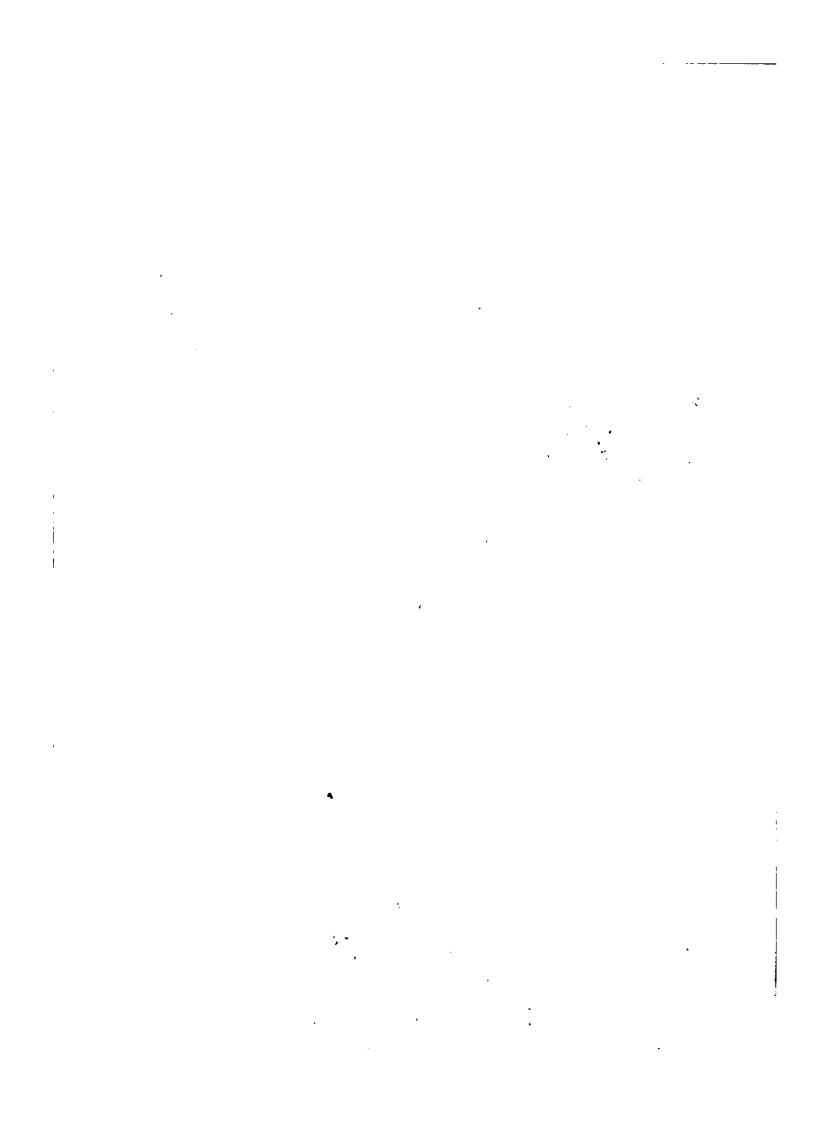
When God delivered Jericho to the Israelites, he commanded that every thing in the place should either be destroyed or deposited in his treasury; but one of the Israelites, Achan by name, the son of Carmi, of the tribe of Judah, had seen a

wedge of gold and a garment, which he coveted to make his own; these he stole and hid them in his tent: this the omniscient eye of God had seen, though Joshua knew it not; he therefore directed that lots should be cast to discover who the sinner was that had troubled the people, and brought a judgment upon them, when the lot fell on Achan, who confessed to Joshua what he had done: for this sin Achan was stoned to death, and then burned with fire. After this the Lord's anger was turned away, and he delivered the city of Ai into this people's hands.

Since God saw the secret act of Achan, should it not teach us that we cannot hide our iniquities from his sight, and make us afraid of sinning against him? but should he suffer us to escape detection in this world, there is a day coming when he will call us

to account for our faults, and there will then be no escaping his judgment. It is wicked to covet what we have no right to, and if this spirit is not checked, it may lead us to steal also ; we should therefore entreat the Lord to keep us at all times by his grace, for only as he keeps us, shall we be preserved from sinning against him.

In the conduct of Achan we have a striking instance of the fatal effects the love of money has on the minds of those who are of corrupt and covetous dispositions; and the manner in which his secret sin was brought to light, and punished, may serve to show that the enjoyment of ill-gotten wealth is but of short duration ; for there is no act of our lives so secret, but that the all-seeing eye of the Lord is present, and every thought, word, or deed, he knoweth it altogether.





*Thou shining ruler of the Day,
Awhile thy burning Chariot stay;
And thou, O Night's inconstant Queen,
Still let thy friendly Face be seen.*

THE SUN AND MOON STAND STILL.**BEFORE CHRIST 1451 YEARS.**

**Your lives, false Gibeonites, but never free ;
Slaves you shall remain, by Heaven's decree,
Wood ye shall hew, and water ye shall draw,
And serve the followers of God's holy law !**

JOSHUA, in bringing the children of Israel to Canaan, was called to execute vengeance upon the inhabitants of that land, for their wickedness. God had borne with them long, and though he is patient, he will not always be trifled with—vengeance may be slow, but it is always sure. The destruction of the inhabitants of Ai followed after the ruin of Jericho; as we find in the 8th chapter, the king of this place Joshua hanged, and burnt the city. These tidings soon reached the ears of the people of Gibeon, who knowing they were also exposed to divine judgment, took measures to obtain a league with the Israelites,

(Joshua ix. 1.) some of them pretending they were ambassadors from a far country, and appeared before Joshua with old garments upon them, and mouldy provisions, which they declared were good when they left home, but owing to the length of the journey had become perished, and that their object was to obtain a league with the Lord's people. To this statement too easy credit was given, and without asking advice from heaven, a covenant was made with these deceitful men. It soon came to light that they had acted with fraud, and lived very near; but as the rulers had sworn unto them, no harder measures could be taken than to make them servants, "*hewers of wood and drawers of water to the congregation.*" Observe the danger of rashness! hasty conclusions often involve men in difficulties; the way to do things correctly is to pray for di-

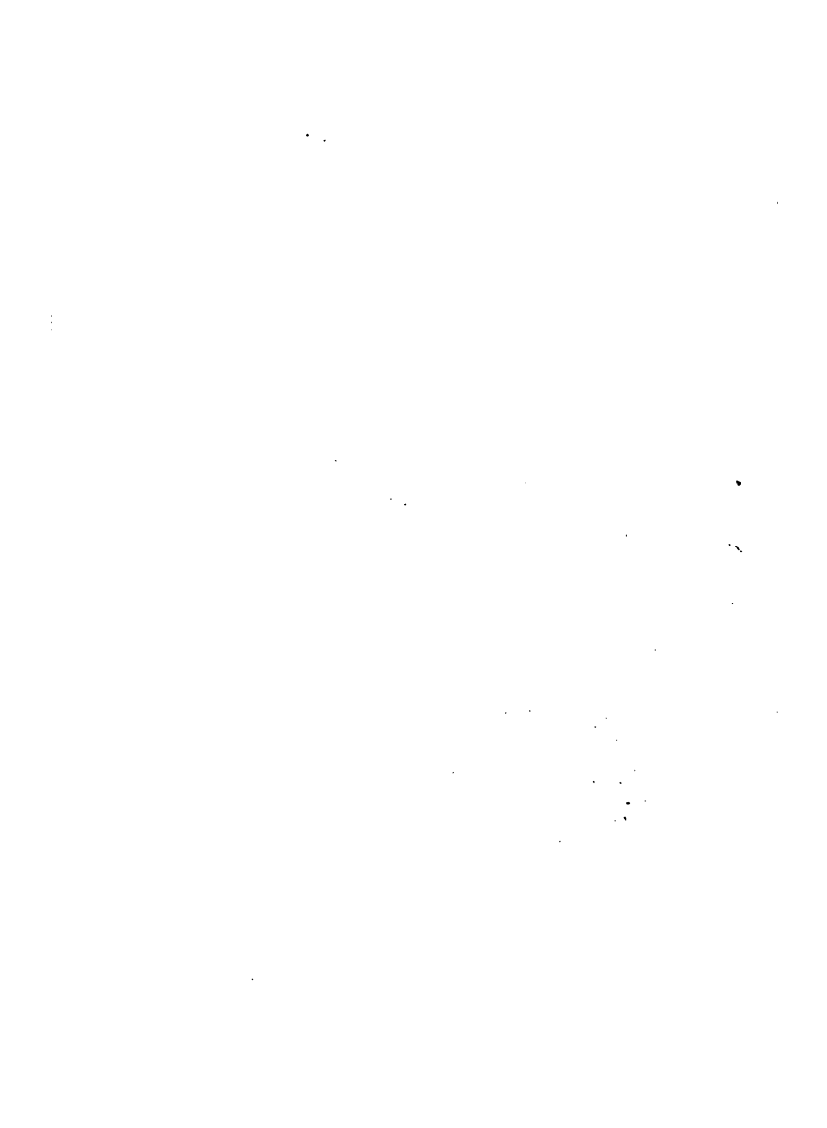
vine counsel. No sooner had the Gibeonites obtained this peace with Joshua, than five kings of the country combined to smite them ; they therefore sent to Joshua to come and save them, which he did, and smote their enemies ; at the same time great stones fell upon them from heaven.

While this dreadful contest was carried on, Joshua said, in the hearing of the people, “ *Sun stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon ;*” and with God’s permission they obeyed, by which the Israelites had light to smite their enemies effectually : after which they hanged the five confederate kings. No doubt Joshua had a divine impulse upon his mind, thus to speak to the Sun and Moon, but it is not to be expected we shall see such miracles in this period of the world.

We observe that no sooner had the Gi-

beonites obtained peace with Israel than their enemies beset them ; and so soon as poor sinners are at peace with God through Jesus Christ, do their spiritual enemies endeavour to destroy them ; but as sure as Joshua came to the succour of these people, so sure will the Saviour of sinners deliver his afflicted children from those who would destroy their souls ; to him therefore may we go in times of need, and find him at hand to deliver us from those who would otherwise be too strong for us.

Let the faith of Joshua teach us that we may be sure of help from God, when we cease to doubt concerning his omnipotence, and are lead to pay the most sacred regard to every thing contained in the holy Scriptures ; and where any thing seems to rise beyond our comprehension, let us humbly pray to be enlightened by divine grace from above.





*Ye sons of Israel, all draw near,
Your General's last advice to hear;
To you he this last warning gives,
And fain would bless you while he lives.*

JOSHUA'S FAREWELL.

BEFORE CHRIST 1427 YEARS.

Death to the pious hath no fears :—
Replete in honour as in years,
Joshua to yield his breath prepares,
Still shows his fond parental cares.

THE five kings who had combined against Gibeon, having been destroyed, we find in the 10th chapter what solemn work Joshua had to do in cutting off the inhabitants of several towns, not sparing a soul of the idolatrous Canaanites wherever he conquered. In Joshua xi, we read of another campaign, in which there were many kings united to oppose Israel ; but they failed in their attempt and were destroyed, for none can possibly prevail against God and his cause. When the measure of the people's iniquity is full, judgment must succeed, and it signifies nothing how strong or how great they are, if, by sin, they have forfeited divine

favour and protection ; their transgressions will prove their ruin ; for in proportion as sin prevails, the defence of a people departeth from them. In the 13th and following chapters we read of the division of the land, at least so much of it as was conquered, for there remained much to take possession of by force of arms ; but they were to share what was already obtained, that they might enjoy the benefit of their past battles, and take the comfort of their attainments. Now they found that the Lord was faithful to his promise, in bringing them into the possession of Canaan, and to him they had reason to ascribe praise ; nor have we less reason to acknowledge the hand of God's providence in all the mercies we enjoy ; it is to him we owe our all, therefore to him be all the glory.

In Joshua chap. xv. we are informed what

was Caleb's lot. Caleb was a good man, he stood with Joshua against the false spies ; (Numbers xiv.) it was promised that he should see Canaan, and we find them sharing in the good land. God will not forget those who have stood forward in his cause ; he often blesses them in time, and if not in this life, he certainly will in the life to come.

When Joshua, the devoted and faithful servant of the Lord, was in daily expectation of his death, at the advanced age of one hundred and ten years, he was anxious to take an affectionate leave of the people whom he had served long and faithfully: their welfare lay much at his heart; and while he reminds them what great things God had done for them, he cautions them against familiarity with the devoted nations, lest they should thereby be tempted to forsake God; at the same time assuring them that whatever might

be their determination, "*as for himself and his house they would serve the Lord.*" (Josh. xxiv. 15.) Pious and wise resolution! happy are they who, relying on the grace of God, are determined to go and do likewise; for there is no real happiness here, but as we are found cleaving to the Lord with all our hearts, and are enabled to "*walk before him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life.*" (Luke i. 75.)

One very powerful reflection naturally arises on reading this solemn farewell exhortation of Joshua to the children of Israel, which is, that as he was so earnest to acquaint them with the miseries that would befall them if they forsook the true God, so we ought especially to instruct and admonish each other, confirming one another in the knowledge, love, and worship of our heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ.





*Then the unwieldy Monarch rose,
When to the King the hero goes,
And eager in his Country's cause,
With his left hand the dagger draws.*

EHUD SLAYS KING EGLON.

BEFORE CHRIST 1316 YEARS.

Oppress'd by Eglon's iron sway,
To the great God of heaven they pray,
And Ehud, a deliverer by heaven's decree,
Destroys their King and sets them free.

THE people, during the lifetime of Joshua, their great leader and captain, appear to have gone on well in conquering their foes, and in the great duties of religion ; but after his death they allowed the Canaanites to dwell among them, which was contrary to the express command of God, and consequently proved very injurious to them. For this breach of the divine orders, the Lord sent an angel to rebuke them, (Judges ii.) which induced them to mourn and weep before God for their sins.

Happy for those who are savingly touched by the just reproofs of the Almighty and are led to forsake their evil ways ; but alas !

many are only alarmed for the moment, and when the fear is over, turn again to iniquity ; such appears to have been the case with the Israelites, for we find in Judges ii. 11, that they forgot the Lord their God, and served Baalim and the groves ; the idols of the country, among groves of trees, according to the custom of the idolaters of the land. O how wonderful that such highly favoured people should ever forsake the Lord, and turn to idols that could not profit them ; but so awfully depraved is the human heart, that unless God keeps the very best of his people by his grace, they are prone to sin against him. The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel for their idolatry, and he sold them into the hands of the king of Mesopotamia, who dealt rigorously with them eight years. When they cried unto God in their trouble, he pitied them in their distressed condition, and raised up a de-

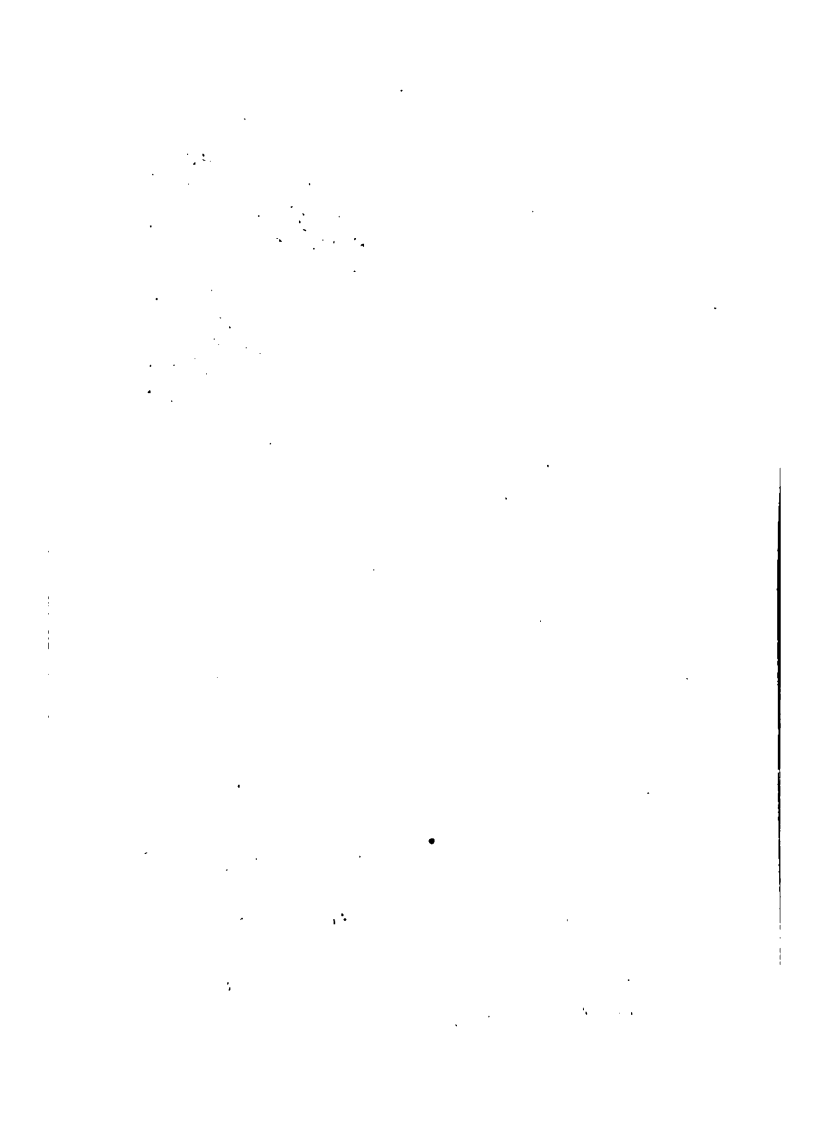
liverer for them in Othniel, the nephew of Caleb, who broke the yoke of their oppressor, and for many years the land had rest.

We are informed that Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, marrying wives from among the heathen women, by whom they were led on to commit idolatry, and other-wise acting evil in the sight of the Lord; as a punishment, therefore, for their sins he strengthened Eglon, the king of Moab, against them, who gathered together the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed their cities, and ruled over them eighteen years.

This judgment made them once more seek to the Lord for a deliverer, who raised up Ehud, son of Gera, a left handed man, by whom the children of Israel sent a present to king Eglon. Ehud had provided himself with a short dagger, and girded it under his raiment, and when he was alone with Eglon,

he thrust the dagger into his belly, and killed him, thus releasing the Israelites from the oppression they laboured under.

Nothing but a divine impulse could justify such an act as this, but the Almighty approved thereof as a punishment for his enmity against him and his people. After Ehud arose Shamgar to deliver Israel, and he smote six hundred Philistines. Thus from time to time did the God of all mercy raise up means to save his people ; and it would have been well had they been rightly affected by his goodness, but they were continually offending against him, and none but a God of infinite patience and long suffering could have borne with them. But all must confess at the last solemn day, "*Righteous art thou, O Lord, and just are thy judgments !*" Let us then no more disregard the riches of his mercy, but may his goodness lead us to repentance.





*While Sis'ra slept, the crafty Dame
With a large spike in silence came,
Which driving hard, without dismay,
She nail'd the warrior as he lay.*

SISERA KILLED BY Jael.**BEFORE CHRIST 1285 YEARS.**

Of Jabin, Canaan's tyrant king,
And strains of Joy the victors sing:
Jael, the instrument of heaven,
By whom to Sisera death is given.

NOTWITHSTANDING the children of Israel had suffered severely for their many acts of sin, yet we perceive, as we proceed in the history, that the chastisements of the Almighty had only a short effect upon them; in a few years they grew remiss in duty, and turned aside again from following the Lord. In Judges chap. iv. we read of a fresh instance of their backsliding and of their punishment in consequence.

The Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan, who grievously oppressed them during the long period of twenty years. In former instances their enemies had not been allowed to hold them in subjection so

long, but shorter seasons of affliction produced not the desired effect, therefore their trials were lengthened ; and this is just what we must expect, if we continue in disobedience ; if the smaller instances of God's displeasure will not turn our hearts, he will send severer ones ; he will make all that transgress against him know, that it is bitter and fearful to stir up his anger, and that however stubborn they are, he will overcome them at the last. When they felt this affliction press hard upon them, they once more turned to the Lord, who raised up deliverers for them, in the joint efforts of Deborah, who was a prophetess, and Barak, who was to command the forces. The king of Canaan had an immense army, and nine hundred chariots of iron, while Barak's forces consisted only of ten thousand men ; but God was in the midst of them, and this

made them more than equal to their enemies, who were completely routed, and Sisera, their general, fled away on his feet, while the Israelites cut off all that had opposed them. Thus we see that the Lord can save by the means of a few as well as by large numbers, for what were ten thousand men to the almost numberless hosts of the enemy? Added to which their chariots of iron made them more formidable, for these war-carriages had scythes fastened to the axle-trees, which, when driven in amongst foot soldiers, mowed them down dreadfully; but all proved in vain when God took his oppressed people's cause in hand.

Sisera escaped to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, who was at peace with the king of Canaan; here he got refreshment and laid down to rest; but he was not safe in this tent, for "*Jael took a nail of the*

tent, and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary, so he died."

(Judges iv. 21.) This woman's mind was no doubt stirred up to this act of justice on this sinner, and though this act of Jael was of a most extraordinary nature, and God for wise purposes gave a sanction to it, yet it must not be taken as a precedent.

We may observe from this event how uncertain life is; there is no place where we may not be surprised by death, and perhaps when we least expect it. And happy are they, and only they, who are ready for the solemn change, and who, knowing that it is in eternity only they can look for real rest and complete happiness, through the favour of Almighty God, and the smiles of their blessed Redeemer.



*The signs which God to Gideon gave,
His holy sovereignty made known;
That he alone has power to save,
And claims the glory as his own.*

GIDEON'S VICTORY.

BEFORE CHRIST 1249 YEARS.

Gideon reviews his host on Herod's plain,
Too numerous yet the victory to gain:
Three myriads, who at first the hero join'd,
Went off, three hundred only left behind.

IN the history of the Israelites we discover a continual proneness in them to depart from the living God. For a season after the deliverance wrought by the hands of Deborah and Barak, the land had rest; but on a respite of God's judgment, they returned again to their sinful ways, which brought a new calamity upon them.

The Midianites made inroads into their land, destroyed their harvest, and took away their cattle and sheep. The incursions of these enemies had such an effect upon the people, that they were quite dispirited, and for fear hid themselves in dens and caves. This was the consequence of departing from

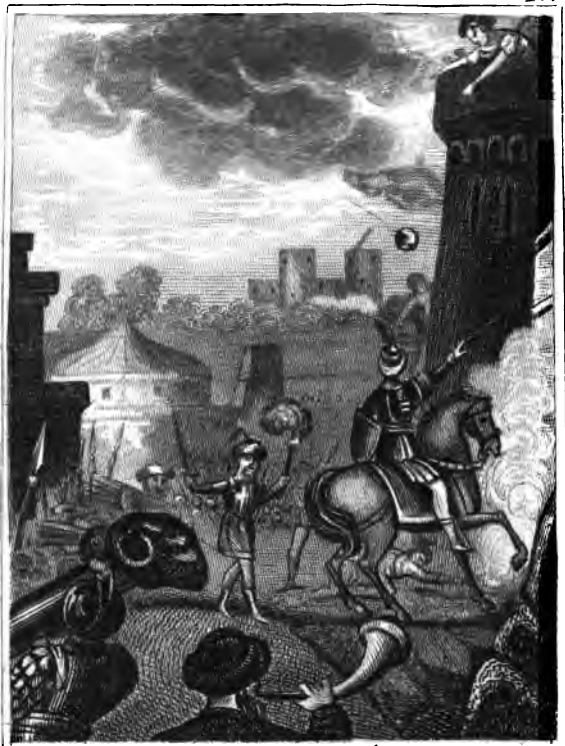
God ; it filled them with alarm, and made them an easy prey to a band of robbers, whom they might have withstood, and even destroyed, had not sin caused their courage to fail, and their defence to depart from them. This trial lasted seven years, when the people began to look to that arm which had so often wrought deliverance for them, and which was their only hope in this time of need. The Almighty was pleased to hear their cry, though their rebellions were so frequent, and offensive to him, considering what great things he had done for them.

A prophet was sent to reprove them for their wickedness and ingratitude, after which God sent an angel to Gideon to appoint him the deliverer of his people Israel. The angel found Gideon employed in threshing wheat : and it is very observable in scripture that those who have been used by God

as instruments for good, have generally been called from some industrious course to serve his cause; this should teach us to be diligent in the performance of our duty, by which we may expect to enjoy the countenance and support of Almighty God. But Gideon had little faith, and could not conceive how God could be with him as the angel assured him was the case, seeing all this evil had befallen them, but he soon discovered that the Lord meant to employ him, for the people were willing to follow him as their general; God directed Gideon to reduce his army to three hundred men, who were each to carry a trumpet in one hand, and a pitcher with a lamp in the other; thus equipped, they approached the enemies' camp in the night, and then blowing their trumpets and breaking their pitchers, they cried, "*The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!*"

This created such an alarm in the camp that they thought the Israelites were in the midst of them, and mistaking one another for enemies, they destroyed every man his fellow ; thus the Lord once more delivered his people by his interposing providence. Gideon followed up the victory by pursuing the enemy and making great slaughter among them.

The Lord is able to bring about the greatest events, either with or without any visible means, which should teach us to be humble and dependent upon his power. The terror of the Midianites should convince us that no people are so safe or so happy as those who have the Lord for their God. Let us ever remember that, if we repent of our sins, *“ God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* (1 John i. 8, 9.)



*The raging king, with rising ire,
Proceeds to set the door on fire;
When from the top, in open view,
Part of a rock a woman threw.*

THE DEATH OF ABIMELECH

BEFORE CHRIST 1206 YEARS.

How soon the giddy globe of fortune turns,
The captive smiles, the insulting victor mourns !
This, great Abimelech ! from thee we learn ;
And future warriors may their fate discern.

THE people having been delivered by Gideon from the oppression of the Midianites, they entreated him to rule over them, which he declined, urging that God alone should be their ruler : but though he would not act as supreme head among the people, he had the happiness of living forty years to see peaceable times in the land ; and at length died in a good old age, having been a great blessing in his day and generation. Gideon left behind him seventy sons besides Abimelech, the son of a concubine, in whose bosom the spirit of ambition reigned, and nothing would satisfy him short of being king. To effect this purpose he appealed to his

mother's relations, who, though a concubine, was certainly a woman of high rank, whether it would not be better that he should reign over the people, than that they should be governed by Gideon's sons ; this suggestion pleased the men of Shechem, and they gave him money to bear his expenses ; with this he hired abandoned persons into his service.

Nothing can set bounds to ambition, and it is no uncommon thing for the worst of men to seek after those places of honour which ought to be the reward of righteousness alone ; and when an unlawful object is to be obtained, the basest means are too often employed by the wicked and the designing. The first step which Abimelech took, after being chosen by the people, was to murder all his brethren with the exception of Jotham, the youngest, who hid himself. What will not ambition and the love of power

lead some men to commit ? There is no crime which an ambitious man will not be guilty of to remove obstacles out of the way. We should, therefore, watch and pray against such a spirit, and learn to be thankful for the station that God has placed us in, endeavouring to fill up the duties thereof, rather than seeking to be raised above it, for the higher we stand, the greater is our danger, while humility is the place and state of safety.

When Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel, the Lord sent an evil spirit between him and the men of Shechem, and they grew jealous of one another ; the Shechemites were once as proud of having a king in the midst of them, as Abimelech was of being chosen to that office : but a great change had now taken place, and God permitted it as a punishment for the awful murder of Gideon's sons, in which these

people countenanced Abimelech. A civil war was the consequence of this disagreement, in which much cruelty and bloodshed took place ; and when the king had punished the Shechemites, his turn to be cut off came, for when he approached the tower to Thebez, to burn it, a woman cast a piece of a mill-stone on his head, which broke his skull. Thus the Almighty avenged the death of Gideon's sons, and by a righteous judgment cut off this wretched rebel.

O beware of committing sin, for God sees it, and will assuredly take vengeance on all those who break his holy laws. Evil ever pursues the wicked, and though for a season they may appear to prosper, it will not always be so ; but suppose it should be so to the last, remember there is a dreadful *hereafter*, when God will give to every man his just and eternal reward.



*He saw the maid & like a statue stood,
 Pale was his alter'd face, congeal'd his blood,
 My child! no longer mine alas! no more;
 Thy cruel duty we must both deplore.*

JEPHTHAH'S RASH VOW.

BEFORE CHRIST 1143 YEARS.

The irrevocable word to God is past,
"Now thou art his, this day must be thy last."
When Israel's safe, her death she scorns to grieve,
And only asks, submit, a short reprieve.

BY the righteous judgment of the Almighty, Abimelech was cut off. We find in the 10th chapter of Judges, that Tola judged Israel twenty-three years, of whom nothing particular is recorded ; but doubtless they were raised up for wise ends, and made a blessing to the nation ; during their government things went on well, but after their death, the people returned to their besetting sin of idolatry ; and, by the account, it appears that they gave themselves completely up to this iniquity, and not only worshipped Baalim and Ashtaroth, the idols of the Canaanites, but also the gods of Syria, Lidon, Moab, Ammon, and the Philistines,

Alas! to what lengths of sin will men proceed, when they are allowed to follow the dictates of their depraved nature; happy are they who are preserved by the grace of God from every besetting sin. Surely it was to be supposed that the Lord would renew his judgments on this dreadful departure from him, for he will not suffer any idol to stand in competition with him; he will be worshipped alone, or he will cause his anger to be felt. As might have been expected, so we find that the Almighty visited this wickedness by selling the Israelites into the hands of the children of Ammon, who oppressed them eighteen years. This judgment seemed once more to bring them into a penitent frame, and they cried to the Lord, who directed them to cry to their gods for deliverance; but they found that however they might be satisfied with these dumb idols

in the days of prosperity, they could afford them no help in the season of adversity ; no, be assured that none but a holy God will support us in the hour of calamity ; all other help is vain. When the Almighty seemed to hide his face from them, they put away their gods and turned to him, and we are told in sweet and striking language, “ *that his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.*” O what a gracious and compassionate Being is our God. “ *He pities us in our low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever.*” (Psal. cxxxvi.)

To avenge Israel, God raised up Jephthah, who appears to have been the son of a concubine, and was treated with great contempt by his brethren. This induced him to take shelter in the mountains, accompanied by a number of young men, and the whole body being considered as profligates, were compelled by necessity to make depre-

dations on the heathens for subsistence. Hence they acquired so great a fame for their courage, that the elders of Gilead were induced to court their assistance against the Ammonites, and Jephthah smote them with a great slaughter, but the success was embittered to him, for he promised that whomsoever came forth to meet him on his return, he would offer in sacrifice to the Lord. This proved to be his daughter, his only child ; but whether he offered her for a burnt offering, or whether she only lived single and devoted to God, does not appear. We may, however, learn, how uncertain every thing is in this life : our days of greatest joy may be embittered by some unexpected sorrow : and we may also see how unwise it is to make rash vows and hasty determinations, for we know not what distress we may thereby bring upon ourselves and others.



*The lion, Sampson soon had slain,
Which roard against him on the plain;
With his bare arm his heart he found,
And left the carcase on the Ground.*

A LION SLAIN BY SAMSON.

BEFORE CHRIST 1141 YEARS.

Endowed with super-human power,
And undismay'd in peril's hour,
Samson a raging Lion slays,
But nothing of the deed betrays.

THE history of Samson, upon which we are now entering, embraces many striking and wonderful features ; his birth was foretold by an angel who appeared unto his mother, and gave her the joyful account, that, ere long, she would be blessed with a son. When God intends to bring an extraordinary person into the world, as Samson certainly was, he generally does it in such a manner as to strike attention ; and it has been admitted by the most learned and pious men, both ancient and modern, that the angel here mentioned was no other than the Divine Messiah himself, but called a messenger be

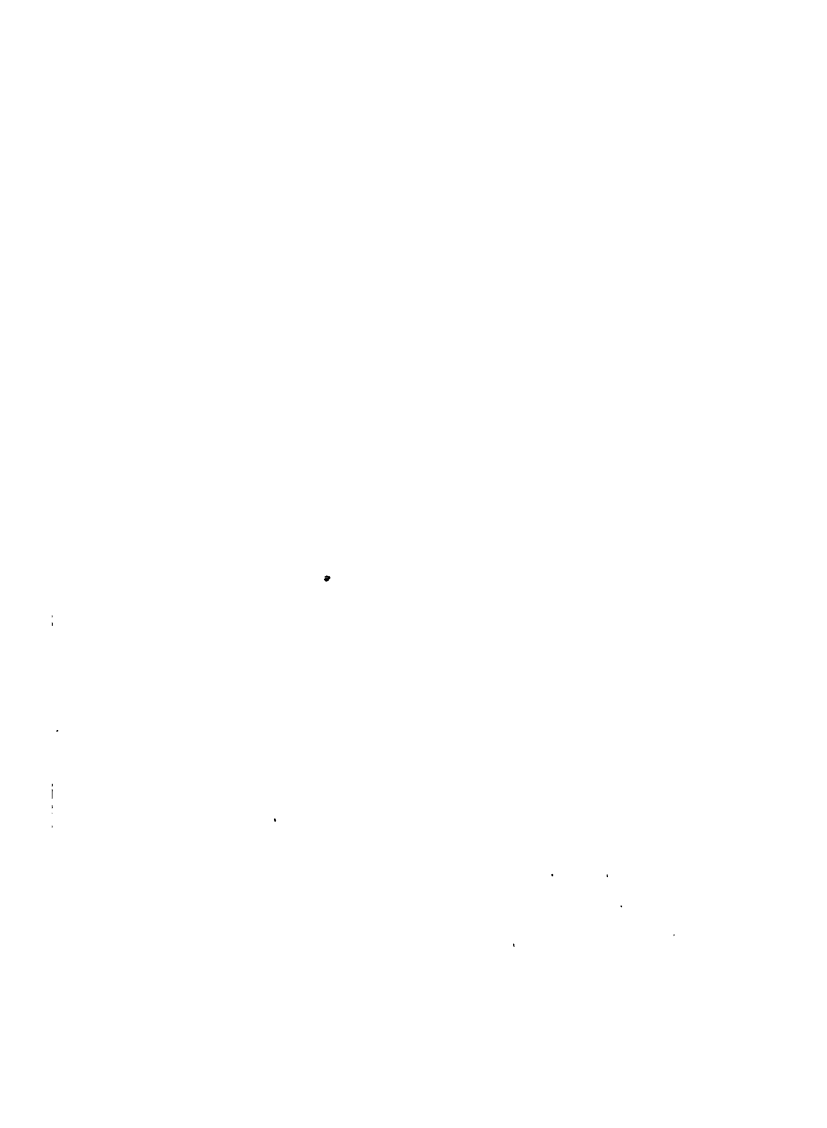
cause he appeared in a human form. Barrenness in that age, as well as at present, among the children of Israel, was looked upon as a great evil, and therefore no news could be more welcome to this afflicted woman, than that she should have a son.

The angel who foretold Samson's birth, appeared again, and gave instructions how the promised child was to be brought up, it being intended that from his birth he should be devoted to God, who sent him into the world to begin the deliverance of his people from the hands of the Philistines, to whom he had given them up for forty years, because they had grievously revolted from him. When the angel appeared to Manoah, the father of Samson, he was anxious to detain his heavenly guest, and afford him some refreshment, for which purpose he dressed a kid ; but the angel desired him to offer it

as a burnt-offering to the Almighty, this he did, and in the flame which consumed the offering, the angel ascended to heaven. When Manoah and his wife beheld the wonderful scene, he was alarmed, and concluded they would certainly die, because they had seen God ; for it was an opinion in ancient times, that to see God or an angel would be death to the individual : but it did not prove their death : and his wife, who was a pious woman, encouraged him by the conclusion that if God had meant to kill them, he would not have accepted their offering, or showed them what he had done. The frequent appearances of divine beings, and the common visits of the prophets, rendered the people in that age, incapable of distinguishing whether they were mortals or not; and therefore Manoah, in desiring the angel to stay with him till he had dressed a kid to entertain

him in a proper manner, was doing no more than what he should do, consistently with the rules of hospitality, to every honest stranger.

When Samson was grown up, he set his affections upon a Philistine woman, and going to Timnath to see her, a young lion roared against him, when the spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he rent the furious beast and killed him with ease; thus the Lord gave him a proof of the power he would afford him, to execute the work for which he had raised him up. If we refer to 1 Peter v. 8, we read of a lion who goes about seeking whom he may devour; this means the devil, who, by violent temptations endeavours to destroy men's souls; and they only can be secure from Satan's power, to whom God gives his grace to resist all his vile attempts to seduce and ruin mankind.





*The Lion that on Sampson roard
And thirsted for his blood;
With honey afterwards was stord,
And furnished him with food.*

SAMSON'S RIDDLE.

BEFORE CHRIST 1490 YEARS.

If they the knotty riddle could explain,
Each for his share should a rich vestment gain ;
At length they with his facile wife confer :
She wrung it from her lord, and they from her.

SAMSON went down again to Timnath to celebrate his marriage with the daughter of the Philistines, and on turning aside from the path to see the lion which he had slain, he found a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase, and he took of the honey and did eat, not telling any person from whence he got it ; but at his marriage-feast he proposed a riddle to thirty young men, who were his companions, the tenor of which was ; *" Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness ;"* this was to be solved in seven days, or they were to forfeit thirty sheets and thirty changes of raiment ; but if they showed its

meaning, he was to give them the like reward. Up to the seventh day his companions could not declare the meaning, when, forgetting all the generosity and friendship that ought to exist on such occasions, they threatened to burn Samson's wife and her father's house, unless she explained to them the riddle; but Samson had not told her, therefore she could not satisfy them, yet the dread of what they threatened, made her importunate with Samson to know the meaning, which she obtained, and divulged it to them: thus informed, they were enabled to state, "*that nothing was sweeter than honey, or stronger than a lion;*" thus they won, but it was a dishonourable part they acted, which roused Samson's feelings, and aided by divine strength, he went down to Ashkelon and slew thirty men, whose spoils he took, and with it paid the forfeit to those

who had expounded the riddle. It may seem singular that Samson should fix his affections upon a Philistine woman ; but it was permitted for wise ends, as it gave him opportunity of being amongst them, and of avenging Israel upon the Philistines for their hard usage of them.

The conduct Samson had experienced, proved an occasion of weaning him from his new relations. He found his friends had abused him, and his wife betrayed him, and therefore he returned to his father's house. It is better to be angry with the Philistines than in love with them, because when any join themselves to them, they are in danger of being ensnared by them. It were well for us, if the unkindness we meet with from the world, and our disappointment in it, had the effect of obliging us by faith and supplication, to turn to our heavenly Fa-

ther's house, and rest there. The inconveniences that occur in our way should make us love home, and long to be there.

During Samson's absence, his wife was given to another ; but ere long he returned to his wife, when her father refused to admit him. (Judges xv.) This gave him another plea for chastising the Philistines :—he caught a number of foxes, and having tied fire-brands to their tails, sent them amongst the corn, and destroyed it. After this the Philistines obtained possession of him, and shouted with joy at their success ; but the spirit of the Lord again came upon him, and with the jaw-bone of an ass which he found, he slew a thousand of them. Observe what instrument God can make use of to serve his own and his people's cause ; all hearts, all hands are under his control, and in the use of them we see his infinite wisdom.





*Lord, let me die, to Sampson said,
And falls amongst the heap of dead;
But in his fall triumphant rose,
O'er thousands of his country's foes.*

SAMSON'S DEATH.

BEFORE CHRIST 1120 YEARS.

"Give me revenge!" to Israel's God he cries,
His prayers is heard,—his utmost power he tries;
Forces the baseless pillars yields his breath,
And thousand scoffers, thus involves in death.

THE Lord raised up Samson for great purposes ; and it was his command by the angel whom he sent to foretel his birth, that he should be devoted to his Maker from his birth ; but, alas ! when we pursue his history, we find some blots in it which much tarnish his glory. The next place we find him in is Gaza, in the land of the Philistines, in the company of an abandoned woman. When the inhabitants heard of this, they compassed the place by night, not doubting but in the morning they should be able to kill him as their enemy ; but at midnight he arose, and by his mighty strength carried away the gates of the city.

But what shall we say about Samson's sins ? it was his shame : and his danger was very great at the time, for his enemies, surrounded him ; thus are all sinners encompassed by their spiritual enemies, who will certainly triumph eternally over them, unless by grace they are enabled to break through their corruptions, and find their way from sin to the living God. After this Samson lived with a woman named Delilah, to whom the lords of the Philistines offered a large reward, if she would betray him into their hands ; to which she consented ; so depraved was her heart, that for the love of money she was willing to betray one that loved her. For a time Samson deceived her as to wherein his great strength lay, by telling her that if they bound him with green withes, then with new ropes, they might take him ; but when the Philistines

set upon him, he broke these bonds asunder ; after this, she wove his hair, but he carried away the pin of the beam and the web. Thus deceived, Delilah assailed him with all her arts, and succeeded in obtaining the secret from him, that if his head was shaven his strength would depart from him ; his hair had never been shaven, for such was the command before his birth, and it was the sign of his devotedness to God.

Delilah no sooner found that he had told her the important secret, than she followed the fatal advice, and Samson found to his cost that the Lord had departed from him, for the Philistines prevailed against him ; then putting out his eyes, they made him grind in a prison-house ; from whence, on a day of great rejoicing and praising their idol gods, they brought him to make sport for them ; but he now took vengeance on them,

for on praying to God his strength returned again ; when he placed his arms against the two pillars, which were very near together, and which supported the house in which was an immense number of Philistines : the building fell down, whereby he killed them, and died himself with them.

Samson is to be considered a type of Jesus Christ.—His birth was foretold by an angel, and at his death he destroyed his greatest enemies ; so was the birth of Jesus foretold, and when he died with out-stretched hands upon the cross, he then destroyed the power of sin and death. But Samson was only an imperfect type of the Saviour, for Samson was a sinner ; but Jesus Christ was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from all sinners.



*Orpha returns and so obeys;
But Ruth with her dear mother stays:
To thee she cries, I will incline,
Thy people, and thy God are mine.*

NAOMI AND RUTH.

BEFORE CHRIST 1312 YEARS.

Ruth, the younger, whose memorable name,
While history remains consign'd to fame,
In weal or woe, her fortunes press'd to share,
One law, one God, for Naomi and her ;

THE short book of Ruth was probably written by Samuel. In it we are presented with a variety of domestic circumstances, which the Almighty was pleased to have left on record, as a proof of the watchful attention of his good providence over the affairs of men. The little family presented to our notice consisted of Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons Mahlon and Chilion, who lived in Bethlehem-judah in the days of the Judges ; it is not exactly known which of the judges, but probably Gideon ; for we are told there was a famine in the land, and in Judges, chap. iv. we read

that the Midianites caused great want by their irruptions in the days of Gideon. In consequence of the famine this family removed into the land of Moab, where there was plenty. The people of the world often fare better than God's people in this life; but they have unfading joys beyond the grave, when the worldling's pleasures will be all at an end. While they sojourned in Moab, Elimelech died, and his two sons, who had married Moabitish women, died also, so that Naomi was left a disconsolate widow in a strange land. Truly this is an uncertain chequered life, and God sees fit sometimes to let one trouble quickly succeed to another, as Naomi experienced; happy therefore are they who are prepared for all the trials of life, by having their hearts fixed upon God as their confidence and hope, and being assured that every

thing which he permits is for their good and his own glory.

The sons of Elimelech did wrong in marrying strange wives, for God had forbidden his people to marry with the heathen ; but one of them, Ruth, proved through divine grace an excellent character ; for when Naomi had heard that the Lord had visited his people with bread, and would return to her native land, she advised her daughter-in-law to abide with their relations in Moab ; but Ruth would not be left behind, being determined to go with her mother into the land of Israel. Orpah, the other daughter, seemed at first disposed to leave her home, but she was persuaded, and returned back, while Ruth was determined that nothing but death should separate her from Naomi ; most pathetically exclaiming, "*Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from follow-*

ing after thee ; for whither thou goest, I will go ; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge ; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

There is something very striking in the conduct of Ruth on this occasion ; though Naomi entreated her to abide in Moab, and though she had seen Orpah go back, she would not leave her mother ; which may be considered as a pattern to us to be steadfast in the ways of the Lord, and having set out on the heavenly journey, to be resolved by God's help never to turn back : alas ! some turn back as Orpah did, after a fair profession, and thus disappoint the people of God, who hoped well of them. O then let us entreat the Lord to enable us to hold on our way ; then shall we ere long arrive where no enemy will be able to assail us, or any subtle tempter suffered to draw us back.



*Such rites as Israel's law allows,
Make the fair Moabite his spouse;
And from the offspring of the dame,
At length the great Messiah came.*

RUTH MARRIED TO BOAZ,

For confidence repos'd in heaven
 To Ruth is God's protection given;—
 Boaz views her with a lover's eye
 And scenes of plenty now are nigh.

RUTH and Naomi, her mother-in-law, having set out together from Moab, as we read in the 1st chapter of Ruth, at length arrived at Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest; the inhabitants of which place were moved about them, and exclaimed, "*Is this Naomi?*" who used to be so well off, but is now so reduced; Her answer is striking and humble—"Call me not Naomi, (*pleasant*;) but Mara, (*bitter*,) for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me." She acknowledged the hand of God in the trials she had experienced; it is a mercy when we can see him ordering all things for us, whether painful or pleasant; for he is all-

gracious to do us good, and all-wise to order aright for us.

Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a man of wealth, Boaz by name ; and when Ruth would go and glean in the field, a kind Providence so ordered it, that she went into his fields ; it appeared a matter of small consequence to her what reapers she followed, if she might but gather up the scattered ears. From this trifling circumstance much good resulted, which proves how great a matter may spring from what seems of no importance at the moment, and should lead us to believe that God attends to, and controls our most minute concerns. Boaz, who was a good man, spake kindly to Ruth, commending her for the tender care she had shown to Naomi, and directed his reapers to treat her well : here she gleaned till the end of the harvest, and carried home to her mother-in-law

what she gathered, and they dwelt together.

But it was not the wish of Naomi that Ruth should live so humble a life. Ruth, therefore, instructed by Naomi, followed Boaz to his resting-place, and according to the custom of the times for persons in her circumstances, lay at his feet until the morning. On his discovering her, she acknowledged her own meanness. thanked him for all his kindnesses to her, but reminded him that he was a near kinsman, whose duty it was to support the house of her father-in-law, and solicited his protection to see the law fulfilled on her behalf. •

But there was a nearer kinsman to Naomi than Boaz, and Naomi having land to sell, it was the right of that kinsman, according to law, to redeem that land ; but it was part of the agreement that he who redeemed the land should take Ruth to wife: this the

nearest relation declined doing, which gave Boaz an opportunity of performing that which the other refused ; he, therefore, married Ruth, who was thus raised from the low ebb of adversity to the height of prosperity ; and she had the honour of being the mother of Obed, the grandfather of David, and the greater honour of being one of the ancestors of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus God blessed Ruth ; she had left her idol gods, and joined herself to the Lord, and his people ; and she now found that *“godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is now to come.”* (1 Timothy iv. 8.)

The history of Ruth is of considerable importance, as it presents to us the sweetness and satisfaction of a calm and placid life, and especially as it manifest the operation of true religion on private individuals, in the various stages of distress and affliction.



*Samuel the child was wean'd and brought
To wait upon the Lord;
While young, to pray to God was taught:
And read his holy word.*

THE LORD CALLS SAMUEL.

BEFORE CHRIST 1128 YEARS.

Shall Eli's sons, with pride elate,
The priesthood stain, and brave their fate;
Not so ;—the doom of those is nigh,
Who God's most sacred laws defy

WE are informed in the 1st chapter of the 1st book of Samuel, that there was a certain man of Mount Ephraim, named Elkanah, who had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah; Hannah had no children, which was her grief, but her husband's affection was great for her. Peninnah had children : this caused her to despise Hannah, and treat her unkindly, which produced an unhappy division in this family, who were in other respects pious people ; for we read, that year by year they went up to Shiloh, where God's altar was, to worship.

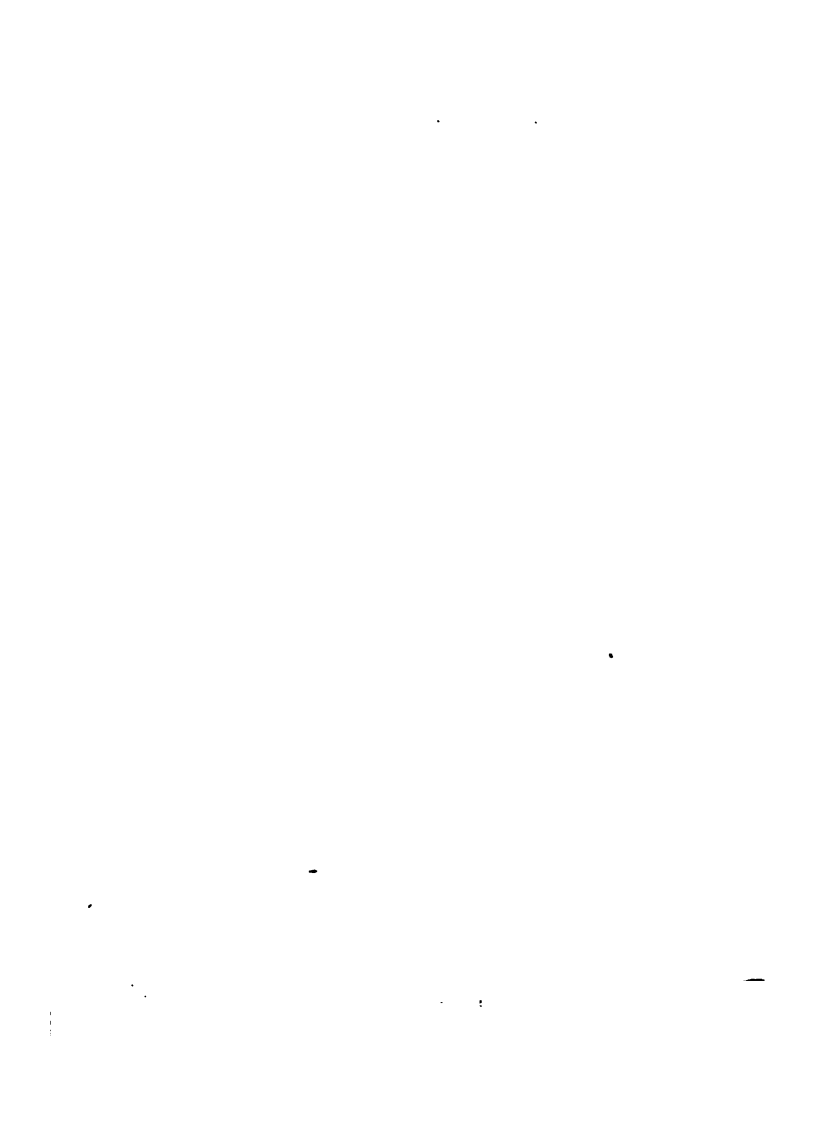
Often do we find in the Bible that good men departed from the original institution

of God, by taking more than one wife; and it was a sin that generally brought its own punishment with it, in creating feuds in their families. Happy are they who are enabled in all things to attend to the Almighty's appointments, for then it is most likely to go well with them. Hannah, though an afflicted woman, was a truly pious character, and as such persons ought to do, she sought her comfort in God, to whom she made known all her sorrows: be assured there is no friend like our heavenly Father in time of trouble; there is nothing earthly can afford the relief that prayer does; therefore in all your troubles go to Him, and pour out your soul before Him, leave your case in his hands, and you will in his good time, as Hannah had, have cause to sing a song of praise to his holy name. It was in the house of God at Shiloh, where she effectually entreated the

Lord to bless her with a child, promising that if he would condescend to grant her request, she would devote her son to his service. While wrestling in prayer, in which her lips moved only, and her voice was not heard, old Eli, the high-priest, who was in the house of God saw her, and mistaking her manner, charged her wrongfully and hastily with being drunk, which she modestly and humbly proved to be false, and told him the subject of her prayers, when he blessed her.

Hannah retired from this duty cheerful and happy, she found her burdened mind eased, and returned home with Elkanah, where, ere long, by a gracious answer of God to her prayer, she became the mother of a child, whom she called Samuel, "*asked of God.*" This child, according to her vow, at a proper time she took up to the house of

God, and left him there under Eli's orders to minister to the Lord. In the 3rd chapter, we have a very pretty account of the manner in which the Lord made himself known to him; it was by night, he was on his bed and the Lord called "*Samuel*;" he heard the voice, and ran to Eli, supposing the old man wanted him, but he told him he called not; this was again repeated, when Eli perceived that God had called the child; he therefore told him when he heard the voice again, to say, "*Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth*;" the Lord did call again, and told young Samuel the awful things that should befall Eli's house, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. "*And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him; and all Israel knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord.*" (1 Samuel iii. 19, 20.)





*Eli's two sons, that ephods were,
The thirsty sword disdains to spare:
Beside the ark they both lie dead:
The ark was seiz'd, and Israel fled.*

DEATH OF ELI'S SONS.

BEFORE CHRIST 1120 YEARS.

Success the Israelites presage,
And thence the Philistines engage
Lo ! Israel's banners victory flies,
The ark is lost, and Eli dies.

ASSUREDLY it was a great honour that the Almighty conferred upon young Samuel when he called him by name, and communicated his mind to him concerning the house of Eli. It is a mercy when young people are found in the house of God ; for there he reveals his will, and has often made himself known to those who are but of early years. O seek God betimes, it will save you from a thousand evils in life ; it will afford you many sweet hours which the things of the world cannot yield ; for happy is he who findeth wisdom : *"her ways*

are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." (Prov. iii. 17.) Having God for your friend, you will be prepared for all events.

Eli's sons, who were priests, were so extremely depraved in their conduct, that the anger of the Lord was roused against them for their iniquities, and against Eli for not exercising his authority as the high priest and their father to restrain them ; their father did not take them in hand, but God would ; for sin is an evil which he hates, and will most surely reckon with men on account of it. The solemn judgment that awaited Eli's family, God made known to Samuel ; these sad tidings Samuel feared to carry to the old priest, but he insisted upon knowing all. It was God's design he should know them, and receiving the intelligence from so young a person must have

been very humbling to him, and it proved that the Lord was indeed angry, or he would not have passed so aged a servant by, and made known his mind to a child. Eli was deeply affected, yet submissive, and exclaimed. "*It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.*" A very proper expression under all the afflictions we are called to endure; it is a blessed thing indeed when we can see the hand of God in every event, and humble ourselves under his correcting rod. As Samuel hearkened to the voice of the Lord, let us learn, that we are under the strongest obligations to attend with seriousness to every thing in the sacred scriptures and Eli's submissiveness should teach us, at all times resignation to the divine will.

As God had threatened to visit the house of Eli, so we see that not one word of his shall fall to the ground; for a few years

after the solemn warning, there was war between the Israelites and the Philistines, and the Israelites were defeated, when nothing would serve their purpose, but they must have the ark of God into the camp, foolishly thinking this would ensure them success, though they had not the presence of God with them. The ark was borne on the shoulders of Hophni and Phinehas, the wicked sons of Eli; and in the next battle these two priests were slain, and the ark taken by the Philistines: the news soon reached the ears of Eli, who was so affected, that he fell from his seat, and his neck brake; and the awful account proved the death of Phinehas' wife also. O observe the dreadful consequences of disobedience and sin, and how strict the Lord is in his threatenings against it.



*The lowing kine unguided went,
By the directest road;
When the Philistines homeward sent
The ark of Israel's God.*

THE ARK RETURNED TO ISRAEL.

BEFORE CHRIST 1092 YEARS.

From place to place the ark is pass'd,
And heavy judgments follow fast ;
With dread the Philistines return,
And cease their sacrilege to mourn.

THE Philistines having got possession of the ark of God, they brought it to Ashdod, and set it by their god Dagon ; where the ark triumphed over the idol, for Dagon was cast down before it, not once only, but whenever they set up the mutilated image it fell again ; this may teach us that truth shall prevail over error, and that the Lord will certainly triumph over Satan. The Almighty also punished the men of Ashdod for the contempt shown to the ark, which was the emblem of his presence ; this disposed them to send it to Gath, and from thence to Ekron ; but wherever it came, it brought destruction along with it, till at last

they determined to send back the unwelcome guest to Israel again. (1 Samuel v. 11.) Thus, by those that oppose God, he is considered as an enemy, and they are glad to get rid of him, instead of praying that his judgments may be sanctified, and they admitted into his favour.

According to their determination, they sent the ark home, but on its arrival at Bethshemesh, it proved a terror even to the people of Israel; for the men of the place did not treat it with veneration, but out of a sinful curiosity looked into it, when the Lord smote several of them for their irreverence.

It is a dangerous thing to trifle with the great God; we may, blessed be his name, approach him with holy reverence and godly fear; but to those who slight him and his worship, he will prove a consuming fire.

O let us think highly of Almighty God,
“stand in awe of him, and sin not.”

After this the ark was lodged in the house of Abinadab, (chapter vii.,) where it remained some time in obscurity, when the people in general began to lament after it. They had long been content without this visible token of God's presence among them, but at length better feelings prevailed; this Samuel discovered to be the case, and, therefore, availing himself of the good frame the people were brought into, he faithfully pointed out the importance of putting away their idols, and returning to the Lord with all their hearts. Idolatry was a darling sin with these wretched people, who were yet so highly favoured with the blessings and mercies of God. From this awful iniquity, Samuel now endeavoured to bring them, and he succeeded, for we are told they did put

away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only.

They then held a public fast at Mizpeh, and wept and prayed; this was a glorious day with Israel, for the Lord was very near to bless them. Tidings of this public meeting reached the ears of the Philistines, and they determined to avail themselves of this opportunity to smite Israel; but God was now on their side, and he fought for them, to the great destruction of their enemies. In joyful remembrance of this signal interposition of the Almighty, Samuel set up a stone between Mizpeh and Shen, and called it Ebenezer, saying, "*Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.*" (1 Samuel vii. 12.) May we have grace and gratitude to acknowledge all God's tender mercies, and never allow ourselves to pass his acts of loving-kindness unregarded.





*For Saul they search'd the tribes around;
But the young King could not be found;
By God's direction then they went,
And found him hid within his tent.*

SAUL ANOINTED KING.

BEFORE CHRIST 1070 YEARS.

Now Saul, by Heaven's supreme decree,
Is appointed Israel's king to be;—
"The chosen, thou," the prophet said,
And pours the Oil upon his head.

ONE of the greatest blessings that the people of Israel ever had, was in having Samuel for their ruler. He was a good man, and he taught them the good ways of the Lord ; he judged them uprightly, and was a faithful friend to them ; but he now got advanced in years, and being unable any longer to bear fatigue as he had done, he appointed his sons judges over Israel ; but they did not tread in his steps, and follow his good example, for they took bribes, and perverted judgment, (1 Samuel viii.) It is a great blessing to children to have pious parents, whose principal aim is to lead them in the right way ; but it will bring down a

heavy judgment on children, if having had this privilege, they should be found forsaking the good advice given them in their youth, and turning aside after sin.

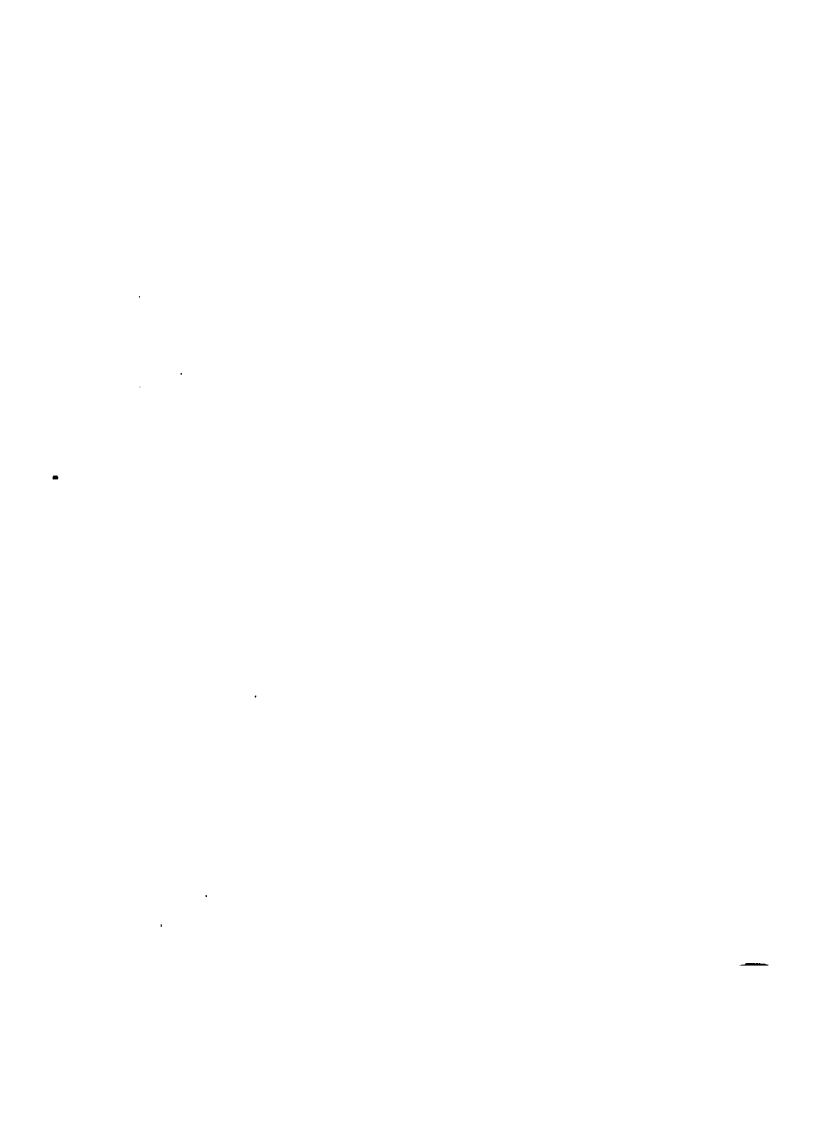
The misconduct of Samuel's sons furnished the people with a plea for asking that a king might be appointed over them, as was the case with other nations; this request the elders conveyed to Samuel, who was much grieved, and who, in fervent and humble prayer, spread the case before Almighty God. He was much distressed that the people were dissatisfied with the government of God; for though it appeared but reasonable that they should complain of his sons' bad practices, and seek to be relieved from their rule, yet he well knew that in asking a king, they wanted to look great, like the surrounding nations, being tired of the plain and humble appearance of Samuel, who ruled

them not as a king, but as God's prophet. Though the Lord knew their motive for asking a king, yet he indulged them in their request, at the same time directing Samuel to show them how much harder they would find the usage of an earthly king, than they had been used to find the dealings of their heavenly Governor. It is a mercy that the Lord does not always give us all we ask, or we should be ruined at our own request; and if we are brought to heaven at last, we shall have as great cause to praise him for what he has withheld from us, as for what he has bestowed upon us.

As God had promised the people by the mouth of Samuel, that they should have a king, so he chose out for that post, Saul the son of Kish, a man of Benjamin, who was brought up in obscurity. Kish having lost his asses, Saul went with a servant to find

them, (chapter ix. 3.) but after a long search in vain, they came where Samuel was, of whom the servant proposed that they should make inquiry about the asses.

The Lord had previously given Samuel notice that he would send Saul to him, whom he had chosen to be king, and whom he was to anoint to that office; accordingly "*Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?*" (chapter x. 1.) and having gathered the people together, he showed them the king the Almighty had provided, and they shouted, "*God save the king,*" (verse 11.) Thus they had their wish, and God qualified Saul to rule over his people, for he gave him a wise heart as a king, but not a new heart by which to rule them in his fear.





*Samuel now proceeds at large,
To give his last most solemn charge;
You've done, he cries a wicked thing
Rejecting God, to ask a King.*

SAMUEL'S APPEAL.

BEFORE CHRIST 1069 YEARS.

“With steady piety your God adore,
And vain and helpless idols serve no more!
Forsake not him, nor will he you forsake,
Whom he his own peculiar choice did make.”

AFTER Saul was anointed king, he had an opportunity of rendering his people a very essential service, for Nahash, the king of Ammon, came and encamped against Jabesh-gilead, and could only be prevailed upon to withdraw by being allowed to put out the right eyes of the men of the city. (1 Samuel xi. 2.) which would have prevented their fighting, for in those days they used shields in war on their left arms, which covered their left eyes; so that to deprive them of their right eyes would be in a manner to make them blind.

The men of the city requested of Nahash seven days to consider of this proposal; and

immediately sent intelligence to Saul of their danger, whose zeal was excited on their behalf, and the spirit of God coming upon him, he threatened to punish those men of Israel who did not join his standard ; this brought together three hundred and thirty thousand men, and with these he made so rapid a march, as to surprise the Ammonites in the morning watch of the day when they were to have inflicted the cruel punishment proposed on the Gileadites. The besiegers fell an easy prey to the army of Saul, who routed them, and delivered those for whom he fought. It was well these oppressed people had such a zealous and willing friend to fly to in time of need. But we may fly to a stronger arm than that of Saul's in the hour of danger ; let us then make God our refuge, and we shall ever find him a very present help.

After this great deliverance, the people all assembled at Gilgal, where they praised God for the success afforded, and then they unanimously made Saul king over them. At this meeting Samuel was present, and appealed to the people in very pathetic language, as to his conduct while he ruled over them. "*I am old, and grey-headed, and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day ; here I am ; witness against me before the Lord, whom have I defrauded, whom have I oppressed ?*" (chap. xii. 2, 3.) It is well, on giving up any situation, to be enabled to appeal to those whom we have served as to our integrity. It should always be our aim to act uprightly, for by so doing we prove a credit to the religion we profess, and may constrain even bad men to think well, if they will not speak well, of that which leads us to act aright.

The people bore honourable testimony to Samuel's integrity, who did not reprove them for seeking the government of a king in preference to his ruling over them ; but he reasoned with them of all the righteous acts of the Lord, and his mercies to them for ages past ; and thence inferred how wrong they had acted in asking for a king, when the Lord was their king ; and as a proof of the offence they had given, God caused it to thunder, which made a great impression on them ; but Samuel assured them, though they had sinned, yet God would bless them if they served him ; and as for himself he would never cease to pray for them, and to teach them "*the good and the right way. Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth, with all your heart, for consider how great things he hath done for you.*" (chap. xii. 23, 24.)





*On Samuel, his eye he cast,
And said he hop'd the danger past:
But Samuel rises at the word,
And smites King Agag, with his sword.*

AGAG SLAIN BY SAMUEL.

BEFORE CHRIST 1066 YEARS.

———"Since all thy acts defame
 A king's belov'd, and fear'd paternal name,
 In blood thy hands, in blood defil'd thy throne,
 That fate that others shar'd, is now thy own."

THE people applied to Samuel for a king, that they might be like the nations around them : they wanted to look great, like their neighbours ; but we find that matters did not answer their expectations, for in the 13th chapter we are told that the Philistines (being provoked by having had a garrison smitten by Jonathan the son of Saul) invaded the land, and for fear of them the people hid themselves in caves, and in pits, while a few men followed Saul trembling. Samuel had desired Saul to wait for him seven days at Gilgal, when he would

come and offer sacrifices to God, and show him what he was to do. Finding Samuel did not come, Saul impatiently took an offering and presented it before the Lord ; soon after which Samuel arrived, and severely reproved him for his disobedience ; intimating to him at the same time, that the kingdom would not be confirmed to him. Shall we say it was a small sin in Saul, and a harsh sentence ? Rather let us learn from it how hateful sin is in the sight of God ; that no sin is small in his view : and pray the Lord to give us grace to avoid the appearance of evil. (1 Thess. v. 22.)

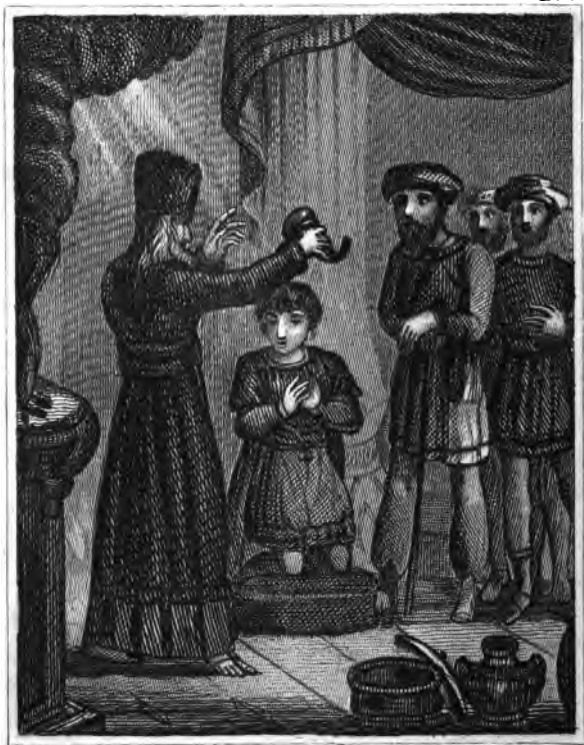
So reduced was Saul's condition now, that he had only six hundred men ; but it was his happiness to have a good and brave son in Jonathan, by whom the Lord was now pleased to give a great victory over the Philistines. The manner in which this victory

was gained proved what Jonathan had said, (1 Samuel xiv. 6.) “ *There is no restraint to the Lord, to save by many or by few,*” for, accompanied only by his armour-bearer, he climbed over a rock, and so got among the Philistines, who fell before his sword. God caused a trembling among the host, and they beat down one another; this was seen by the watchmen of Saul, in Gibeah, who gave intelligence thereof to Saul, and on numbering the people they only missed Jonathan, and his armour-bearer. Now the enemy was overcome; even those who before were faint-hearted, followed them and slew them; and so the victory proved complete.

In the 15th chapter we have Saul put upon a fresh test of his obedience: God had a controversy with the Amalekites, and long since declared he would destroy that nation, (see Exodus xvii. 14.—Deuteronomy xxv.

17, &c.) The measure of their iniquity was now full; he appointed Saul to destroy them, and not to spare man or woman, infant or suckling, or any beast, Saul gathered a large army, and fought against Amalek; but he did his work imperfectly, for he spared Agag, the king, and the best of the spoil: this greatly offended the Lord, and he sent Samuel with a solemn word to him, assuring him that for this sin he had entirely rejected him. After this Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. O beware of disobedience! Saul had an express command given him, and he broke it. We have many commands given us, and Christ has said, "*If ye love me, keep my commandments,*" (John xiv, 15.) May the Lord bless us with obedient minds, and grant us grace to live to his glory





*Eight sons were good old Jesse's claim,
Which to the feast with Samuel came;
But when the holy oil was shed,
Behold, it was on David's head!*

SAMUEL ANOINTETH DAVID.

BEFORE CHRIST 1065 YEARS.

Saul heaven's command dared disobey,
Thence from his line the legal sway :
Samuel the youthful king anoints,
Jesse's house, whom God appoints.

WE read in 1 Samuel, chapter xiii. 14, the warning given by Samuel to Saul for his disobedience, that his kingdom would not continue, and that “ *the Lord had sought him a man after his own heart,*” to rule over his people ; and in chapter xv. 28, &c., he is told that God had rejected him from being king, because he had not destroyed the Amalekites, and had given the kingdom to a neighbour of his, that was better than he. The casting off of Saul caused much grief to good old Samuel ; he was sorely distressed at the sins of one whom he had been employed to bring forward, and whom he saw

hastening on in those ways of iniquity, which must in the end prove his ruin. It well becomes us to mourn over obstinate sinners, for they are in an awful state, and need our earnest prayers ; and if the Lord has been pleased to show us our danger, and given us grace to turn from sin, our gratitude is due to him for his distinguishing mercy and favour.

The Lord had determined to set aside Saul ; he, therefore, gave Samuel a commission to go and anoint the person whom he had chosen to succeed to the kingdom ; accordingly, Samuel filled an horn with oil, and went to Bethlehem, to the house of Jesse, among whose sons God had provided himself a king. (chapter xiv.) When Samuel came to Bethlehem, he offered a sacrifice to the Lord, and invited them to the sacrifice ; when they arrived, he look-

ed on Eliab (Jesse's eldest son) and said, "*Surely the Lord's anointed is before me ;*" but he was mistaken ; for God was pleased to tell him "*not to look upon his countenance or on the height of his stature,*" because he was not the chosen one, "*for the Lord seeth not as man seeth ; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.*" (chapter xvi. 7.) This affords a word of very solemn admonition : O pray that your heart be right in the sight of God ; judge not of your religion, or of your meetness for heaven, by any outward forms or acts, but pray earnestly that your heart may be under the saving influence of Divine grace.

After Eliab had been refused, Jesse made six more of his sons to pass before the prophet ; but none of these were chosen ; he then asked if he had no other. "*And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children ?*"

And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and behold he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, send and fetch him, for we will not sit down till he come hither. And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him, for this is he." (chapter xvi. 11, 12.) And he poured the anointing oil upon him, in the midst of his brethren. David was the youngest of the family, but chosen to be a king ; this was a great honour ; and it has often been the happiness of the younger branches of families to be called of God, very early in life, if not to earthly greatness, yet to what is of far greater importance, an interest in his love and grace. It is this that we should earnestly seek after, and no one can begin to inquire for the blessing too soon.



*With only sling and pebble
He fought the fight of faith,
The weapons seem'd but feeble,
Yet prov'd Goliath's death.*

DAVID KILLETH GOLIATH.**BEFORE CHRIST 1060 YEARS.**

“The giant Philistine to try,
With me the combat ;—I rely
On Heaven, and go with sling and stone,
And trust in Israel’s God alone.”

DAVID having been anointed by Samuel, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him ; and an evil spirit troubled Saul ; David was greatly blessed, while Saul became peevish and unhappy and was terrified by Satan : thus was he punished for his disobedience. The servants of Saul intreated their master to let them seek one who could play on music, which might afford him relief in his miserable hours ; to this he acceded, and none was better qualified for this service than David, who was sent for ; when he played, Saul was refreshed, and the evil spirit departed. (1 Samuel xvi. 23.) Music has a great effect upon the spirits, and will

often cheer the mind, and David's harp, which was often well tuned to the praise of the Lord, no doubt sounded sweet in Saul's ears, though his heart was not right with God; his skill in music was overruled by Providence to give him admittance to the court of Saul, where he was at some future day to be king.

It was not intended that David should immediately reign, though he was anointed; for the time to cut off Saul was not yet arrived, and David was to pass through many trials before he rose to the throne; for the present his father's sheep were his care, while his three elder brethren were with the army of Saul, which was now called into service, in consequence of the Philistines again invading Israel. It was not long since these enemies were completely routed; but they made head again, for

Saul being troubled with an evil spirit, was little able to take every necessary precaution to keep them under; and he had not the Lord's direction how to act.

The Philistines had a giant of monstrous size in their army, named Goliath; he defied the Israelites, and offered to fight with any man they would depute to the combat, but none would accept the challenge: that honour was reserved for David, whom God designed to bring into public notice at this time; accordingly, being sent by his aged father to see how his brethren fared, he arrived at the camp when the giant was defying the army of Israel, and it hurt him to hear the proud boaster's language; he, therefore, told Saul that he would undertake, in the Divine strength, to fight him; for having destroyed a lion and a bear while keeping his father's flock, he doubted not

but God would permit him to destroy this enemy also.

Saul hereupon armed him with a sword, and put armour upon him ; but this did not suit him, he therefore put it off, and choosing some stones, he put them into a shepherd's bag, and took a sling in his hand: the giant drew on with disdain towards the youth ; but David slang a stone, which hit him in the forehead, and sunk into his head, and killed him. David was not concerned in the war, nor did he ever contemplate being an instrument in the hand of God for the destruction of the mighty champion of the enemies of his people ;—but it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps, and David's success may serve to show the wonderful power of the Almighty, and to convince us that the *“race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.”*

1. *Chlorophyll a* (Chl a) content was determined by measuring the optical density of the extract at 663 nm using a spectrophotometer.

2. *Chlorophyll b* (Chl b) content was determined by measuring the optical density of the extract at 646 nm using a spectrophotometer.

3. *Total chlorophyll* (Chl) content was determined by measuring the optical density of the extract at 663 nm and 646 nm using a spectrophotometer.

4. *Carotenoid* (Car) content was determined by measuring the optical density of the extract at 480 nm using a spectrophotometer.



*Young David, though he had supdu'd;
He was by Saul with rage pers'u'd;
And forc'd to shun the tyrant's face,
Lest vengeance fall on all the race.*

SAUL SEEKS TO KILL DAVID.

BEFORE CHRIST 1060 YEARS.

The quiver'd spear, diverted glanc'd aside,
Th' impressive force against the cedar died.
When from his seat the royal minstrel fled,
And for the promis'd crown preserv'd his sacred head.

WHEN young David had triumphed over the giant Goliath with his stone and sling, he went and stood upon his body ; and having no sword of his own, he drew that which belong to the giant, and with it cut off his head.

Thus the Almighty, by the hand of a stripling, gave his people victory, for when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, their spirits were broken, and they fled, pursued by the armies of Israel and Judah, who gave them a great defeat. The vaunting giant had cursed David by his

gods, while David fearlessly approached him with firm confidence in the god of Israel, and came off a conqueror.

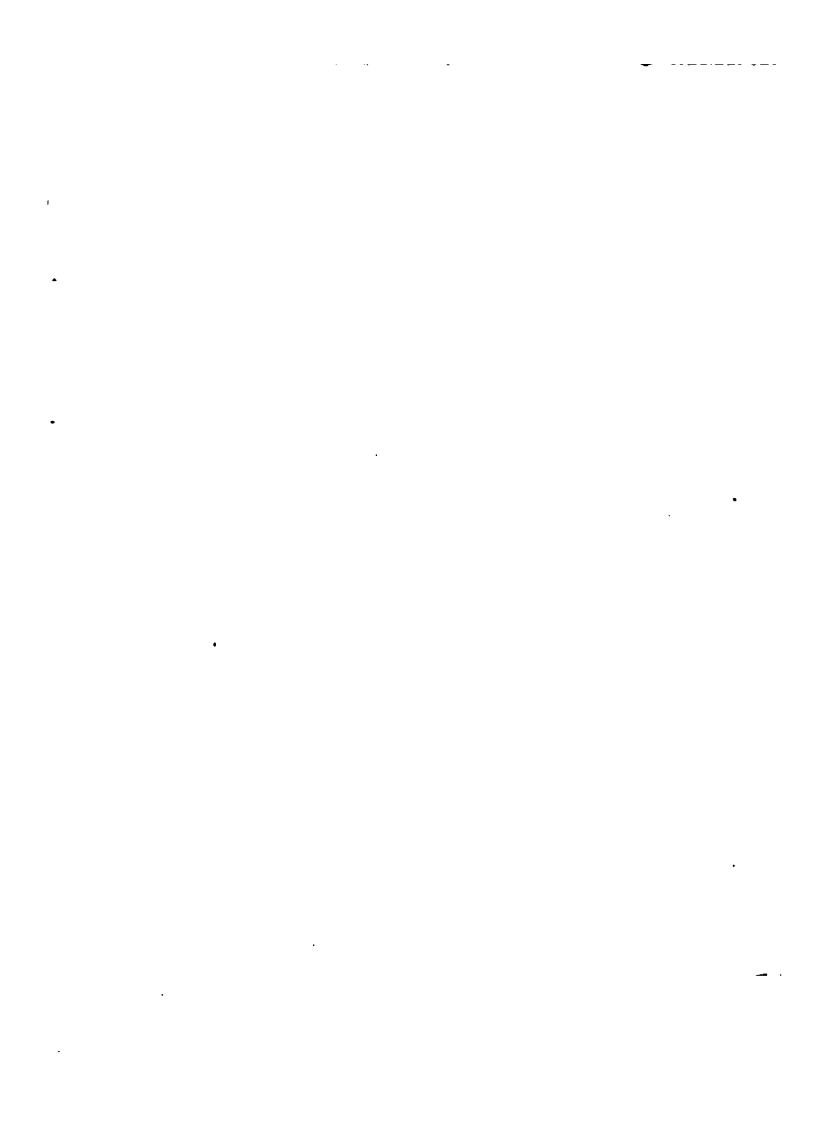
When David returned from the slaughter of the Philistines, Abner, Saul's general, took him, with the giant's head in his hand, and brought him to the king, who inquired his name, for it appears he had forgotten the musician who had given relief to his depressed spirits with his sweet harp; to this inquiry David gave a very modest reply, "*I am the son of thy servant Jesse, the Bethlehemite,*" (1 Samuel xvii. 58.) Not any thing appears more pleasing than humility, especially in youth; it is a lovely grace, and what God in his word has been pleased often to express his gracious approbation of; it is a grace truly worth praying for, and ought to be cultivated by all means in our hearts.

David expressed himself with so much humility and propriety, that Jonathan, Saul's son, who heard him, conceived a great affection for him; it is said that his soul was knit to that of David, and he loved him as his own soul; and as a proof of his great regard, he made David a present of his robe, his sword, and his girdle.

This great friendship of Jonathan never ceased towards David, and showed itself in many circumstances which afterwards occurred; but though Jonathan's love never ceased towards David, Saul was soon displeased with him; for when the women came out to meet Saul on a rejoicing day, they sung to their music, "*Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands;*" this excited his wrath, and induced him to say, "*What can we have more but the kingdom?*" From this time Saul became

jealous of David, and the evil spirit again seizing him, and he endeavoured more than once to smite him with his javelin; but David escaped from him.

They that give way to wrath and envy, as Saul did, do indeed "*give place to the devil,*" (Ephesians iv. 27.) "*Submit yourselves to God: resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you: cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded.*" (James iv. 7, 8.) It was a base return that Saul made for David's great services to him and his country; but when vile and ungovernable tempers get possession of the soul, they are hurried into every sin; therefore we have daily need to look up to the Lord, praying that our hearts may be kept holy, and from the power of sin and Satan.





*The skirt of the King's robe he held aloft;
Which in the cave he had cut off;
Shew'd it to Saul on rising from the cave;
To prove, that his life he wish'd to save.*

DAVID SPARES SAUL'S LIFE.

BEFORE CHRIST 1057 YEARS.

Saul within a cave to take rest,
Where while he sleeps, by cares opprest,
David approaches, yet forbears
Revenge, and Heaven's anointed spares.

THE hatred of Saul towards David was so great, that he left no means untried to cut him off; but that God who intended to place David on the throne of Israel, would not suffer his purposes to be defeated by the rage of a wicked man; his gracious providence therefore preserved his servant until the time came for Saul to be slain.

Saul had promised to give his daughter to wife to the man that should slay Goliath; this was, therefore, David's right, but Saul gave her to another, which was an act of great injustice; he afterwards offered Da-

vid his other daughter, on condition of his slaying a certain number of the Philistines, hoping that he would fall in the interprise; but he succeeded, and obtained Michal for his wife.

Though Saul, in the baseness of his heart acted thus treacherously, yet David behaved himself wisely in all his ways : his constant, upright conduct made Saul's displeasure the more unjustifiable. But how was David enabled to keep his temper, and act in so becoming a manner ? it was because "*the Lord was with him.*" (1 Samuel xviii. 14.) It is the grace of God in the heart that enables us to act in character ; all ability to do what is right comes from God, who is the Author of all that is good ; if therefore, we want grace we must go to him ; and if we have it, we must give him all the glory.

Saul continuing his blindness to the will

of God, next endeavoured to engage Jonathan to assist him in the destruction of David, (1 Samuel xix. 1.) but Jonathan loved David too well to listen to his father's cruel wishes; he, therefore, warned his friend of the danger he was in, and by showing his father how unjust his designs against David were, he reconciled the king to him, and David again returned to court; but Saul's malice was soon excited again, and he once more endeavoured to smite him; after this he sent messengers to his house to cut him off, but Michal, his wife, let him down through a window, and he escaped and fled to Samuel at Ramah, where Saul followed him; but God delivered him from his power. "*Many are the afflictions of the righteous,*" (Psalm xxxiv. 19.) was David's own remark, and he knew it by experience, for he was griev-

ously oppressed by one who owed him every kindness. Every one that Saul could get on his side became an enemy.

He was obliged to fly from society, and live with a little band in woods, caves, or mountains; but the Lord was still with him, and not only delivered him from every foe, but also placed his great enemy in his power; for Saul was brought at one time into the same cave where David was hid. Did he slay him? no; he only cut off the skirt of his robe when he was asleep to show what he could have done; "*And David said to Saul,*" (after they had left the cave), "*Behold this day, the Lord had delivered thee into my hand in the cave, and some bid me kill thee, but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed.*" (1 Samuel xxiv. 10.)



*Abigail's presents and address,
Were soon attended with success;
The joyful chief her gifts receives,
And kindly the affront forgives.*

ABIGAIL'S PRESENT TO DAVID.

BEFORE CHRIST 1057 YEARS.

Nabal, presumptuous, proud, and vain,
Treats David's message with disdain ;
But Abigail, his virtuous wife,
By prudence saves each threaten'd life.

SAUL having entered into the same cave where David was hid, and David's followers considering that Providence had thus put his enemy into his power, they advised him to destroy Saul ; but he was content with only cutting off the skirt of his robe, and even for this action his heart smote him, thinking perhaps that he had offered an indignity to his sovereign. It is one of the greatest blessings that the Almighty can bestow, when he gives any one a tender conscience : this will keep the happy pos-

essor from many sins, and is a strong proof that there is a work of divine grace carrying on in the soul.

After David had thus kindly spared Saul's life, he expostulated in a very pathetic manner with him, as to the wrong he did in endeavouring to destroy him without a cause, and drew from Saul an acknowledgment of his own crime, and of David's kindness in sparing his life, at the same time entreating him to be kind and merciful to his posterity when he should be king, as he knew God had so intended, (1 Samuel xxiv. 16, &c.)

In 1 Samuel xxv. 1, we are informed of the death of good old Samuel, and that all Israel lamented his loss; for it is indeed a loss to a land when a faithful aged ruler or minister is taken to his everlasting rest; and while we ought to mourn because of

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such an event, we should also be seeking for grace to be enabled to follow their good example, that our latter end and eternal state may be like theirs

After Samuel's death, David, having lost a kind and good friend in him, withdrew to the wilderness of Paran, and hearing that Nabal, a man possessing great wealth, was shearing his sheep in Carmel, and being in want of provisions for the men that followed him, David sent an humble request to him for a supply ; as it was rejoicing time at the sheep-shearing season, and Nabal could very well afford to be liberal ; but though David's message was respectful, Nabal, who was a great churl, returned a most scornful answer, and refused the request ; this roused David's anger, and girding on his sword, he took four hundred men with him, determined to be

revenged on him and his house for the insult ; but Abigail, Nabal's wife, hearing of David's resolution, went forth to meet him, and pacified him ; but the Lord smote Nabal that he died, and Abigail afterwards became David's wife. David's angry resentment at Nabal's conduct cannot be justified ; he was then passionate and revengeful, and showed that without the keeping grace of the Lord, even David, the man after God's own heart, was liable to fall into the errors of human nature. (1 Samuel xiii. 14.)

O what need has every one to pray daily, Lord, keep us by thy grace ; preserve us in the hour of temptation ; deliver us from the evils which we feel and fear ; let thy grace in all things be sufficient for us, and thy strength be perfected in our weakness !



*To when the shades of night drew on,
Saul went unto an evil one:
To seek relief at Samuels grave;
But quitting God there's none to save.*

SAUL AND THE WITCH OF ENDOR.

BEFORE CHRIST 1055 YEARS.

Estrang'd from God, Saul seeks to know,
Of Endor's witch his weal or woe;—
"To-morrow, such is heaven's decree,
Thou and thy sons shall be with me!"

THE troubles of David had not ceased, though Saul had been convinced that he did wrong in seeking his life, for in 1 Sam. xxvi. we read that Saul again pursuing him, and another opportunity was given to David of cutting him off while asleep in his camp; but once more he spared him, and only took away his spear and cruse of water, to convince him how great his danger had been.

When David very soon afterwards pointed this out to Saul; he seemed again to

repent, but it was not sincere, David was aware of this and fled into the land of the Philistines for safety. (1 Samuel xxvii.) Saul's wicked race was now nearly run, and he appears to have gone from one degree of sin to another. The Philistines gathered their armies together to fight against Israel; Saul was troubled at their great preparations, and having no friend to go to in his distress, for he had forsaken God, and God had forsaken him, he desired his servants to seek out a woman who had a familiar spirit, and they found one at Endor, a place near where Saul was, and who had escaped the effect of his orders some years before, when in a more religious season he had destroyed such persons according to God's command. (Exodus xxii. 18.) To this woman he repaired by night, and having sworn that no punishment should happen

to her for exercising her horrid arts, he entreated her to bring up Samuel; to which she agreed, and God permitted the devil to put on the appearance of the deceased prophet to deceive this wretched king, who was doomed to ruin.

The apparition asked Saul why he had disquieted him in bringing him up; though it could not be Samuel, for the peace of good men in the grave can never be disturbed by the devil or his agents; Saul told him why he had recourse to this expedient, and the devil gave him to understand that the Lord had cast him off, and ere long he should fall in battle; these tidings greatly affected him, so that it was with difficulty he could be persuaded to take any refreshment. (1 Sam. xxviii. 23.)

In the 31st chapter, we read of the war between the two armies, and of the death of Saul and his three sons ; but how did Saul die ? not with honour, as a soldier falls, but by his own hands, for being wounded he fell upon his sword. Jonathan died also, thus making David's way clear to the throne ; and while it excites sorrow to see him cut off with his wicked father, it leads us to remember that there is a better world, where a glorious and eternal distinction will be made between the wicked and the righteous. O beware of forsaking the Lord like Saul, for in him we see the awful consequences. But let us all endeavour by the grace of God to keep his commandments, and then he will never leave nor forsake us.





*Lo! Israel's tribes to Hebron came;
And with united joy proclaim,
David their King, The Monarch rose;
And to Jerusalem then he goes,*

DAVID PROCLAIMED KING.**BEFORE CHRIST 1048 YEARS.**

Saul and his sons in battle fall,
And David then receives the call
Till rival Ishhosheth is slain,
And this made way for David's reign.

DAVID was so far from wishing the destruction of Saul, that when he was cut off, he lamented his fall, weeping and fasting for the solemn event; and especially was he grieved for the death of Jonathan, whom, in his elegy, he calls his brother. (2 Samuel i. 26.) Death spares none, however dear to us, though we loved them as our own souls; it is, therefore, our wisdom not to attach too much value to any thing in this uncertain life; but to make God our friend, whom we can never lose; and to have our

treasure in heaven, which can never be taken from us.

After Saul's death, the men of Judah anointed David king over the house of Judah : (chapter ii. 4.) He had long been chosen of the Lord for this high office, although many trials were in his way to the throne; but having now, by the blessing of God, surmounted them, he was put in possession of Saul's forfeited crown. There were many difficulties in his way to an earthly crown, and so there are to the crown of glory that fadeth not away ; but the same God who gave David what he had promised him, will also bring his people through all the difficulties they meet with, and put them in eternal possession of unfading glory and honour.

Though God had chosen David to be king, and the men of Judah had anointed him as such, yet Abner, Saul's uncle, set

up a rival to David, in the person of Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, whom Abner made king over all Israel, (chapter ii. 9.) and he continued to rule for some time ; for seven years and a half elapsed before David came to the possession of the kingdom at large ; and that time was not passed without war and bloodshed between Israel and Judah, in which those who followed Ishbosheth were worsted. (chapter ii. 17.) Asahel. one of David's commanders, who was very light of foot ; pursued after Abner to slay him, but it proved fatal to Asahel, for Abner smote him with the hinder end of his spear and killed him ; after this Ishbosheth quarrelled with Abner, which induced him to quit the command of his forces, and go over to David, (chapter iii. 12.) but he could render David only a short service, for Joab David's general, treacherously murdered

him ; this Joab pretended was in revenge for the death of Asahel his brother, whom Abner killed in war ; but it is more probable he was fearful of Abner being raised higher than he in David's favour. Ishbosheth was cut off about the same time by two of his servants ; thus was David's way made clear to the throne, and all Israel joined to make him king. (chapter v. 3.)

David was indeed a good man, for when Abner was treacherously slain, he mourned over him, though he had been his enemy ; and when Ishbosheth was cut off by his servants, he had them put to death for their wickedness, though Ishbosheth stood in his way to the throne of Israel ; thus we have a lesson in all we do, to endeavour to rise above a selfish or revengeful spirit, and learn to love even our enemies.



*Now careful to his own abode,
King David fetch'd the ark of God,
With lofty music's solemn sound;
While Uzzah smitten to the ground.*

UZZAH SMITTEN.

BEFORE CHRIST 1045 YEARS.

The priests alone the ark shall bear,
To them's consign'd the sacred care;
Uzzah a fatal zeal inspires,—
The ark he touches,—and expires!

DAVID being seated on the throne of Israel, his first act was to get possession of Jerusalem, a very ancient city in the tribe of Benjamin, which tribe had suffered the Jebusites to dwell there, and make the place their own. The inhabitants railed at David for attempting to take it ; but he did prevail, notwithstanding ; and it is said, he went on, and grew great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him ; (chapter v. 10.) this it was that made him prosper in all his undertakings ; and if the Lord be on our

side, of what need we be afraid ? The ark of God had for many years been kept in privacy, but David now being in power, was piously bent upon bringing forth from obscurity that emblem of the Divine Presence ; he therefore collected together all the chosen men of the land, to the number of thirty thousand, to grace the solemnity, and brought up the ark from the house of Abinadab. They put the ark upon a new cart, and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the cart, while David and all the people played on music before the Lord, with joy ; thus expressing their pleasure at seeing the ark brought forth from obscurity. There is something very pleasant, and sufficient to excite our joy in the external service of religion ; but when the heart is properly affected with sacred subjects, *we may well rejoice before the Lord,*

for not any thing besides can afford such pleasure to the soul.

But the great joy testified by David and his people on this occasion was damped by a very solemn and unexpected event, for Uzzah observing the ark to shake from the oxen stumbling, put forth his hand and laid hold of it, to prevent its falling; for which error the anger of the Lord was kindled against him, so that he smote him with death. His offence may seem small, and his punishment great; but in sacred things, God is very jealous of his honour and perhaps Uzzah having been long familiar with the ark, had not that becoming reverence for it that he ought to possess. O let us beware of trifling with the doings of the Lord; for with such a solemn example as this before us, it well becomes

christians at all times to serve him with holy reverence and godly fear.

For this breach David was displeased ; he was offended ; and in this he acted wrong, for all that God does is most assuredly right, and it ill becomes us mortals to find fault with his holy ways ; may we rather learn humbly and quietly to submit to his righteous hand, knowing that he is a God of equity, mercy, truth, and justice. For the present, David lodged the ark in the house of Obed-edom ; but ere long, he removed it to Jerusalem with great joy. It is a mercy indeed to have the presence of God with us wherever we go, and to be privileged with the blessing of his word and ordinances where we dwell, and for which we can never be too thankful.



*King David, now, with pious mind,
To build an house for God design'd;
I will, /said he/ an house prepare;
And fix God's ark and worship there.*

DAVID DESIRE TO HONOR GOD.

BEFORE CHRIST 1042 YEARS.

"A temple let us raise to God,
Befitting for the ark's abode ;"
Said David ;—but high Heaven's decree
Pronounced these words,—“It shall not be.”

THE ark of God appears to have been very precious to David, as we go on in his history ; he had brought it with great joy to Jerusalem, but was not content that it should dwell in so mean a habitation as the tabernacle was while his own house was so stately ; the one merely boards covered with curtains, while the other was built of cedar : he therefore communicated to Nathan the prophet, his friend, the thoughts of his mind as to building a house for the ark of God ; this circumstance occurred at

a time when God had given David rest from his enemies, and his land was blessed with peace.

There were no great acts of a worldly nature that David could do for his people, he therefore determined to do something for the Lord. Thus should we endeavour to act; the more leisure we have from the world, the more we should endeavour to improve our time for the glory of the Almighty; and the more we experience his providential care and kindness in placing us in easy and peaceable circumstances, the more should we desire to make a grateful return by devoting ourselves to his service. Such was David's mind and disposition, and with the greatest propriety may it be said, "*Go and do thou likewise.*" (Luke x. 37.)

David's determination to build God a

house was a pious and becoming resolution, and highly approved of by the Almighty, as we read in 1 Kings viii. 18 ; but the Lord was pleased to set aside his intention, by making known to Nathan, for David's information, that it was his holy pleasure that David's son and successor should have the honour to raise a temple to his praise. The message sent to David on this occasion was very gracious, in which the Lord not only informs him of the great things he had done for him, but of his gracious purposes to his family ; and assures him that his mercy shall not depart from his house, as it did from that of wicked Saul.

So deeply was David affected with the gracious communications of God's favour to him at this time, that he went to the tabernacle on this occasion, and poured out his

soul in grateful acknowledgements before the Lord; in this pious address, he speaks very humbly as regards himself, "*Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house ?*" (2 Samuel vii. 18.)

We may well be humble when we reflect on our nothingness, and consider what a great, though condescending God we have to deal with; may humility dwell at all times within our hearts! David then goes on to acknowledge past and present mercies, and concludes by entreating that God's blessing and support may continue.

How sweet are those moments when we can retire from the busy world, and spread before the Lord in prayer our wants, plead his promises, and enjoy his countenance. May we all know much of this blessedness, and as "*we grow in years, may we grow in grace.*"



*The King could not, nor would repent,
No true compunction felt;
Till God in mercy Nathan sent,
His stubborn heart to melt.*

DAVID'S FALL AND REPENTANCE.

BEFORE CHRIST 1037 YEARS.

The righteous Power enthroned on high,
Above the spacious circle of the sky ;
Who weighs in equal scales our crimes and fates,
And sin, where'er he sees, abhors and hates.

HOW bright has David's character shone hitherto, and how amiable has his conduct appeared ! but alas, he was a poor imperfect sinner like ourselves, as we shall now see, and it was only as he was held up by the arm of God that he was safe.

David had, by the special favour of God, defeated the Ammonites and Syrians, as we read in 2 Samuel x., and he now followed, up the blow by sending Joab and an army to waste their country and besiege Rabbah, the capital of the Ammonites. Happy would it have been for David had he been

with his army instead of living unemployed at Jerusalem, where he fell into an awful snare of the devil, and committed adultery with the wife of Uriah, a great soldier, who was now fighting David's battles; so that besides a gross breach of the seventh commandment, here was a base act of ingratitude, unbecoming in any, and how much more so in such a man as David! But the crime did not end here, for he desired Joab to send Uriah from the army to Jerusalem, which was done; and by the hand of this brave man he returned a letter to Joab, in which he directs him to place Uriah in the post of greatest danger, and then retire from him that he might fall, which he did: thus David added murder to his crime, and thus one sin leads to another; the road of iniquity is indeed down-hill, and when we get into that dangerous descending path we know

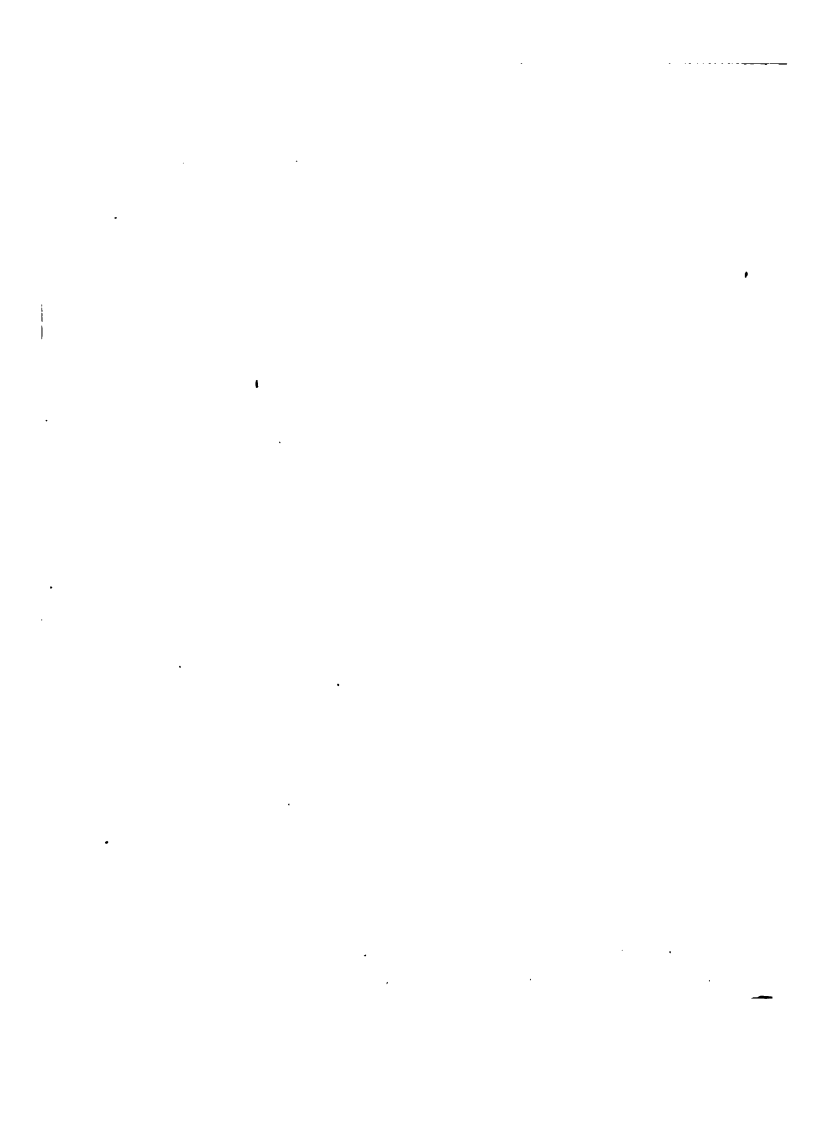
not where we shall stop; we may well cry,
"Hold thou us up, and we shall be safe."
 (Psalm cxix. 117.)

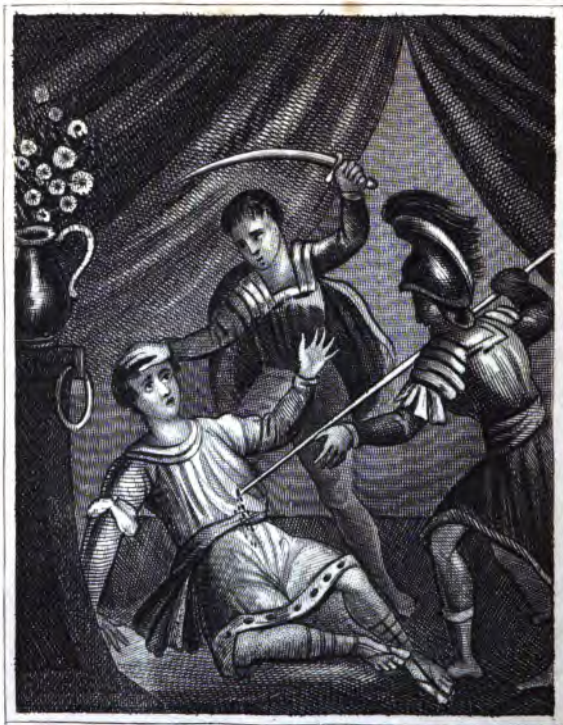
After Uriah was dead, David pursuing his guilty course, married Bathsheba, "*But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.*" (2 Samuel xi. 27.) Though David continued long in his sin, yet God did not cast him off; he sent Nathan with a simple parable to him, and brought a confession from his lips, that the man who had done as Nathan stated, deserved death, when the prophet brought the guilt home to David by saying, "*Thou art the man,*" (2 Samuel xii. 7.) at the same time assuring him, that though God would forgive him, yet judgment should never depart from his house; and so David surely found it all the remainder of his days.

Now, indeed, was his heart melted down;

now he saw what a vile sinner he was ; and on this occasion he wrote the 51st Psalm, where he acknowledges in the most fervent language his depravity, and prays heartily and sincerely to God to *“create in him a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within him ; and restore to him the joys of his salvation.”*

How thankful to Almighty God ought we to be for the unspeakable blessing of such a book as the Bible, which hides not the faults of any one of whom it gives the history : and though we may well mourn to see how sin has spoiled God’s best works, yet it is calculated to afford us hope when we feel our own depravity, that God, who forgave David, will, if through grace, we sincerely repent and forsake our sins and turn to him, *“forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*





*Absalom's servants him obey'd,
And Amnon in the dust was laid
Weltering in blood In wild affright;
The Princely train then urg'd their flight.*

ABSALOM SLAYETH AMNON.

BEFORE CHRIST 1032 YEARS.

Absalom his brother Amnon feels,
His sisters wrongs ; but yet conceals
The mortal hatred, till by Heaven,
The hour of retributions given.

DAVID being informed by Nathan that God had forgiven him his dreadful sin in the matter of Uriah the Hittite, he also gave him to understand that he should suffer for his wickedness, for God would raise up evil against him out of his own house. (2 Samuel xii. 11.) The Lord will not withhold his pardoning mercy from those who pray for it with a broken and contrite heart, but he will correct his disobedient children, and cause them to know that it is a bitter and evil thing to sin against the Almighty.

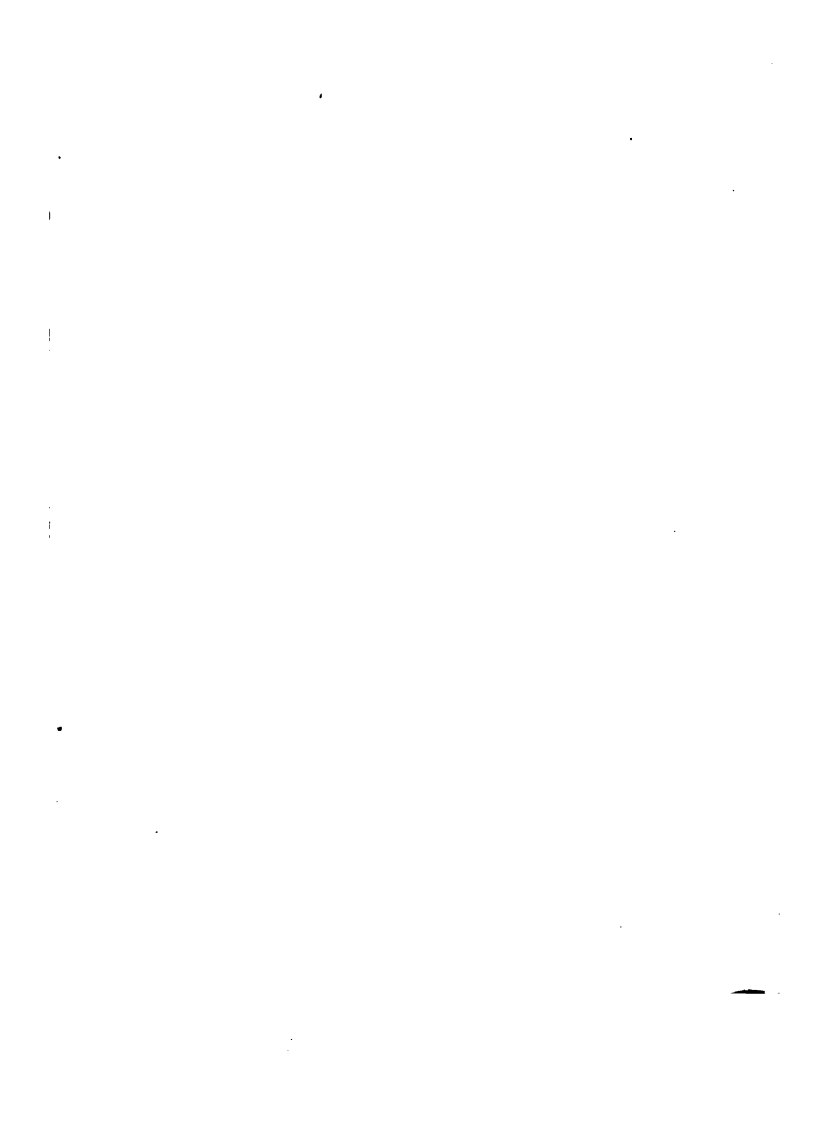
David, indeed, too soon experienced the fulfilment of the Divine threatening, for his son Amnon, having conceived an unholy passion for his sister Tamar, contrived, by the wicked counsel of his cousin Jonadab, to betray that virtue which it was his duty, as a brother, to protect ; for this detestable conduct, Absalom, another of David's sons, designed the murder of Amnon, though he hid the resentment in his bosom for two years before he carried his determination into effect:—and here it may be proper to remark how sinful it is to encourage bitter and malicious thoughts and designs in the heart. For two whole years Absalom carried the intention of murder in his bosom. O let us beware of harbouring hatred and malice, for while it is hateful in the sight of God, it will deprive us of peace of mind.

“From envy, hatred, and malice, good Lord deliver us.”

The cruel Absalom did not give Amnon any reason to suspect his intention, by which he might keep on his guard ; but on the contrary, when he made a feast at the time of sheep-shearing, he invited Amnon, with all the king's sons, to come and partake of the entertainment, to which they consented; but their mirth was turned into sadness—for *“Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, Mark ye now when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say unto you, Smite Amnon ; then kill him, fear not. And the servants did unto Amnon as Absalom had commanded.”* (2 Samuel xiii. 28, 29.) It was a most barbarous act to cut off a brother, while pretending to make him welcome as a guest; and it was an awful thing to be overtaken

by death when in a state of drunkenness, as was Amnon's case. Absalom might have brought his brother to justice in some other way for the injury done his sister, but he chose rather to take the law into his own hands.

Throughout the whole of this melancholy transaction we see the prophet Nathan's prediction made good, for the Lord did in this way raise up evil to David out of his own house. Whatever sorrows we meet with in this life may be considered the consequence and punishment of disobedience and sin; may we have grace to view them as such, and when we are suffering under any trial may we feel humble and patient in the sight of Almighty God as sinners before him.





*When to the Royal town he came,
By his command his friends proclaim
With trumpets sound through Israels plains,
That Absalom at Hebron reigns.*

ABSALOM'S REBELLION.**BEFORE CHRIST 1023 YEARS.**

Now Absalom seeks a distant land,
And raises next, rebellion's hand
Against his father's throne and life,
But Heaven checks the unnatural strife.

AMNON having been murdered, Absalom, his brother, fled into a strange country, where he remained three years, being afraid that he should be punished if he remained at home after so horrid an act: but at the end of that time David longed for his return, for Absalom was a beloved son;—this Joab, the captain of David's host, perceived, and he adopted a stratagem to dispose David to send for Absalom back, as we read at length in 2 Samuel xiv. Joab was induced to act in this way to ingratiate himself with the king, to whom he had become obnoxi-

ous by the murder of Abner, (2 Samuel iii. 27, &c.) for he concluded that if David could be inclined to pardon Absalom, he would not bring him to justice for the commission of a similar crime. David acceded to Joab's request, and sent for Absalom to Jerusalem; but it was two years before David would see him, when at length he consented, and by a kiss sealed his pardon of the crime for which he had long been banished from his native country and his father's presence.

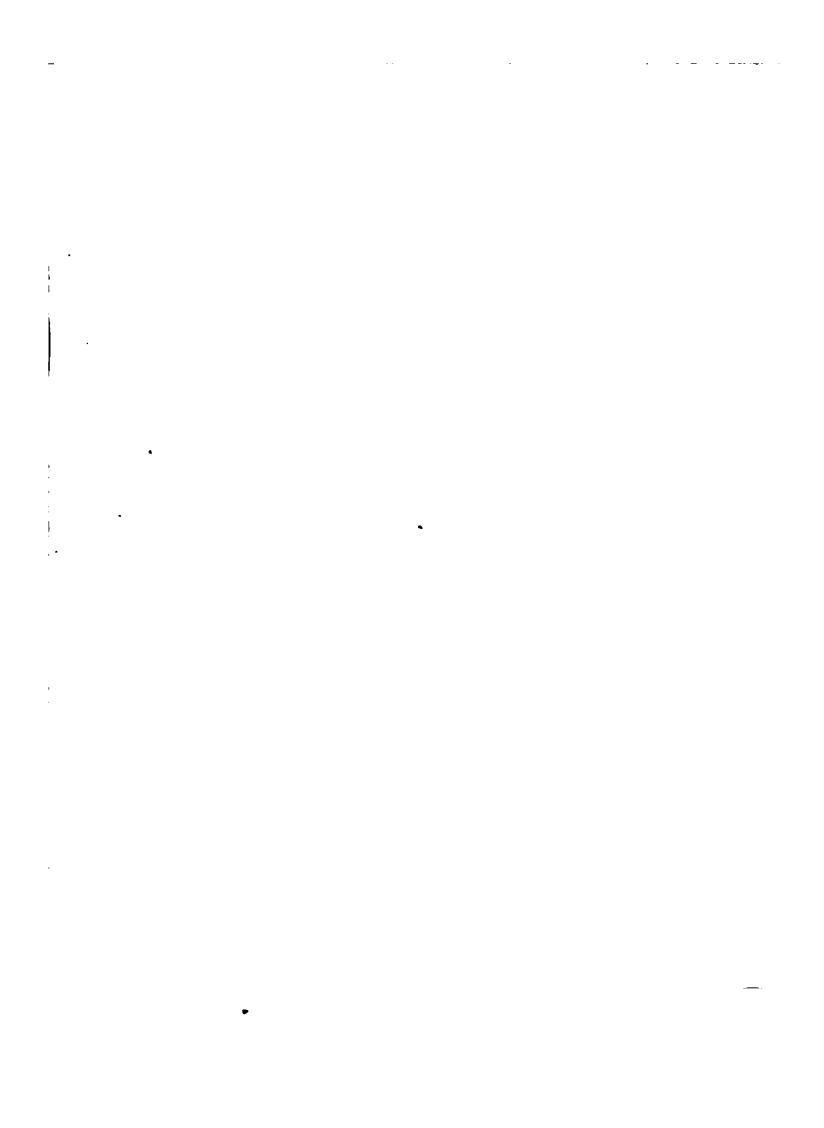
Should we not conclude that for this act of pardoning mercy, Absalom would be a dutiful and affectionate son as long as he lived? Alas! we shall see that he acted quite the contrary, for he was no sooner restored to favour, than he took measures to excite a rebellion to shake the throne of his father, and drench the land with blood by a civil

war. He used various arts to insinuate himself into the favour of the people: he took to himself a great show of state, and affected to study the interests of Israel; but he was acting a treacherous part, and we shall see by the sequel, that God rendered to him the just reward of his wickedness.

Having obtained leave of absence from his unsuspecting father, the crafty and designing Absalom repaired to Hebron, under the pretence of paying a vow which he had made to God, but in reality his intention was to be made king there; having reached that place, the conspiracy became very strong, and tidings soon reached David of the state of affairs, which filled his heart with the deepest distress, and induced him to leave Jerusalem, accompanied by many faithful servants. Now David had reason again to call to mind the day when he sinned against

the Lord by adultery and murder, for what he now suffered was the punishment of a righteous God for those crimes ; but it was his happiness, that though the Lord visited his sins with his rod, yet his loving-kindness he did not take from him. (Psalm lxxxix. 32, 33.)

David, who in his general conduct had been a strenuous asserter of the divine law, thought it his duty, when leaving Jerusalem, to take with him the ark of God, lest any indignity should be offered to it by his rebellious subjects ; but afterwards changed this resolution and ordered it to be carried back, well knowing that the Almighty was able himself to protect and preserve both him and the ark : and in this resignation to the divine will, gave a proof of his piety and confidence, which ought to be imitated by every true christian.





*Shimei, of the house of Saul
Presum'd with foul abuse to call,
And curse the king in impious strain;
But he forbids him to be slain.*

SHIMEI CURSETH DAVID.

BEFORE CHRIST 1023 YEARS.

A wretch he was, of Saul's abandon'd race,
The soul of spite and envy in his face !
See where the felon in the passage stands,
His mouth with curses fill'd, with stones his hands.

DAVID was accompanied by the priests and Levites, on his way up to Mount Olivet, but he sent Zadok and Abiathar back with the ark to Jerusalem, with this pious remark. *"If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both the ark and his habitation ; but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee ; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him,"* (2 Samuel xv. 25, 26.) He did find favour in the sight of God, and he was brought back again, but for

the present his trial was not brought to a close. How painful must it have been to see the king of Israel weeping as he went, and all his followers weeping too, the one almost broken-hearted for the rebellious conduct of his own son, and the others overcome at the sight of their sovereign bowed down with distress !

As David passed along to Bahurim, Shimei, the son of Gera, a man of Saul's house, cursed him, and cast stones at him, calling him a bloody man, and charging him with the blood of the house of Saul, for which he said this judgment had befallen, him ; (2 Samuel xvi.) David's followers would have deprived this wretch of his life, but David would not allow it, for he concluded that God permitted him to curse, and so he humbled himself, considering this as a small trial compared with what he experienced at

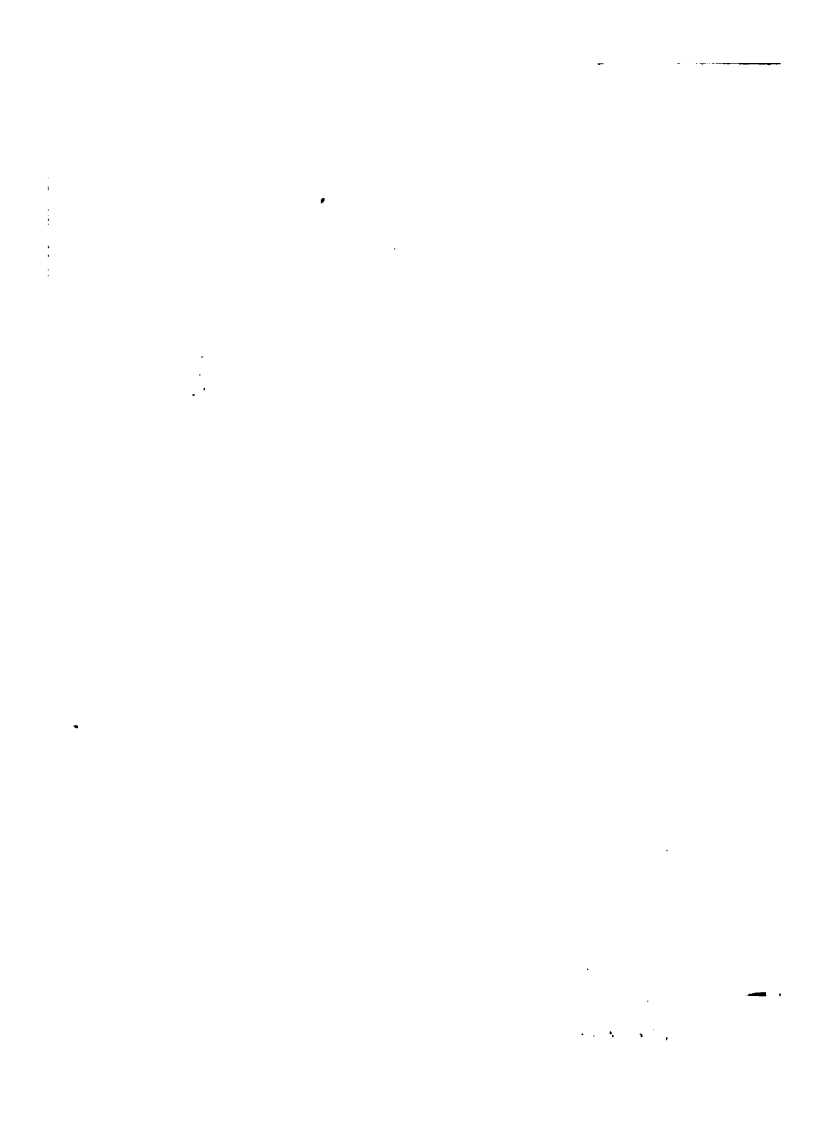
the hand of his own son, who was now most unnaturally seeking his life.

It is a mercy when we can see every trial in the hand of God, and coming by his permission ; for then we may quietly bear it, knowing that it shall answer some good end, and be removed in the Lord's time, which is always the best time.

Absalom and his host of rebellious followers soon came to Jerusalem after David had left it, and the next step he took was to consult Ahithophel and Hushai, two wise men of the day, what measures had better be adopted to accomplish the purposes he had in view ; the former gave him wicked advice, and Hushai gave that sort of counsel that would not answer, for he was David's friend, though now from motives of policy he accompanied Absalom ; and having gained the approbation of Ah-

salom, he sent to acquaint David with the measures proposed, which enabled the king to act accordingly.

“And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his fathers.” (2 Samuel xvii. 23.) His pride was so hurt he could not bear to live. In 2 Samuel xv. 31. David had prayed to God to turn Ahithophel’s counsel into foolishness, and it was granted, for this advice was disapproved, and then he died as the fool dieth. Of all the sins that torment a man, none give him more pain than pride—the Lord bless us with humility for his name’s sake, and *“deliver us from pride and vain-glory.”*





*Among the boughs, the rebel there,
Was left suspended by the hair:
But Joab ran and through his heart
With spear he drove the avenging dart.*

ABSALOM CAUGHT IN A TREE.

BEFORE CHRIST 1023 YEARS.

Royal and rebel armies meet,
And Absalom sustains defeat:
Concealment to a wood he owes,
But there entangled, midst the boughs.

DAVID, in consequence of the advice of Hushai, passed over Jordan with his followers. Soon afterwards, Absalom and his troops passed over also, when he made Amasa captain of the host, being determined to give battle to the royal army. Not content with driving his good father from the throne, and to the extremity of the land, Absalom pursued him still further ; but he did it to his cost, and hurried on to his ruin, as a bird to the fowler's snare ; thus the Almighty sometimes permits headstrong and hardened sinners to press on to their own destruction.

Preparations being made for the battle, (2 Samuel xviii.) David numbered his men, and divided them into thousands and hundreds, with officers over them, intending himself to go forth with them to the battle; but they would not let him, so great was their affection for him, and so highly did they value his life. To their determination he consented, but gave them all strict charge to deal tenderly with Absalom; this appeared mistaken love and pity, for Absalom was unworthy of such a father, and of such kindness; but it may be said that only parents know what parental feelings means, and it is very evident throughout David's remarkable history, that his affection for this wicked son was extremely great.

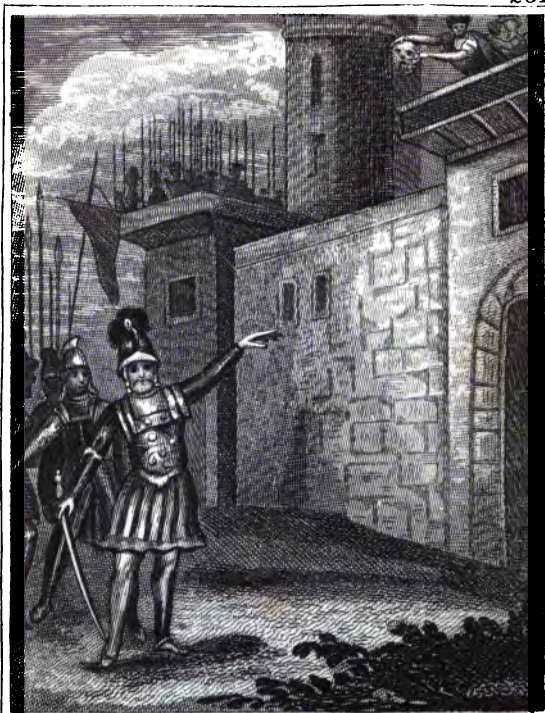
When the battle took place, great slaughter was made among Absalom's troops, twenty thousand of whom fell; and Absa-

lom riding fast on his mule, was caught either by the neck or by his hair, in the thick boughs of a great oak, and the mule going from under him, he was left hanging between heaven and earth, as unworthy of either ; he was observed in this situation by a man who brought Joab word thereof ; upon which that general took three darts and thrust them through the heart of Absalom : his body was then taken down from the tree, and cast into a pit in the wood, where a great heap of stones was piled upon him : thus perished this wicked, disobedient son ; the Lord visiting upon his own head the cruel usage of a pious and affectionate parent.

The death Absalom having been communicated to David, *“the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept : and as he went, thus he*

said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Samuel xviii. 33.) O my children, learn from this story the vast importance of obedience, and the awful consequence of disobedience; God has commanded you in the fifth commandment, "*to honour your father and your mother,*" and if you do not, he will not fail to remember it. Will you not then love those who, as instruments, gave you life, have fed and clothed you ever since you were born, and have always been solicitous about your happiness and welfare; pray for grace to love, serve, and honour them all your days, and if you should ever feel tempted to be disobedient and unkind to your parents, remember the miserable end of wicked Absalom.





*Joab advances on the ground,
And his long lines the town surround;
But they that war no further spread,
Throw o'er their walls the rebels' head.*

SHEBA BEHEADED.

BEFORE CHRIST 1023 YEARS.

Deform'd in death, and dropping putrid gore,
His mouth can vomit treason now no more.
Joab a trumpet sounds, the siege to raise,
And to Jerusalem in peace the host conveys.

DAVID was quite overwhelmed with sorrow on the death of Absalom, which caused him to pour forth the most bitter lamentation: indeed he had cause to mourn over him as regarded his precious soul, for what hope could he indulge that it was eternally well with him? It is this that makes death so terrible to the wicked, that they have no hope beyond the grave, and must excite the most painful sensations in the bosoms of those who are left behind, because when their relatives die without repentance, they cannot but entertain fearful apprehensions

that they are lost. But David's grief seems to have hid the great mercies from his eyes with which he was now favoured, for the Almighty had crushed the rebellion, and there was a prospect, now Absalom was dead, that peace would soon be restored to his suffering people.

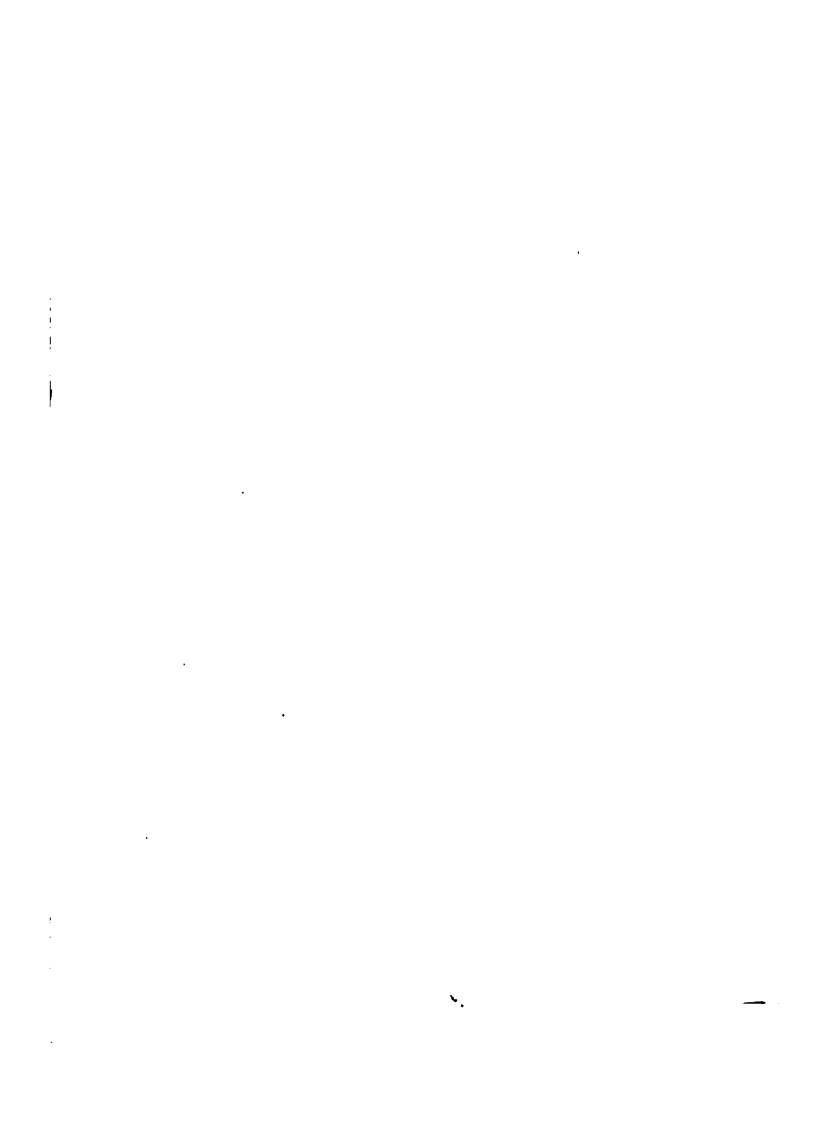
It becomes us, as christians, to watch against excessive sorrow, lest we forget our blessings, and thereby offend the Lord ; for however great our trials may be, there is always enough to be thankful for, when we consider what vile and worthless sinners we are, and that we have forfeited all claim to the divine goodness.

In the 2d Samuel we read an account of the measures taken to bring the king back to Jerusalem ; it had been a time of great distress to David while the kingdom was involved in a civil war, and his soul had

been greatly afflicted with the wickedness as well as with the death of Absalom, but now God was pleased to remove the trial; the dark clouds that hung over the land were chased away, and the sun burst forth again its cheerful beams; thus in this chequered life we pass through many changing scenes; may we have grace when labouring under affliction to "*be still and know that the Lord is God.*" (Psalm xlv. 10.) When brighter and happier days arrive, may we not forget to give all the glory to Him from whom all our mercies flow.

The flames of civil war were however re-kindled, and the peace of the land again disturbed, by the rebellion of Sheba, who declared against David, and shut himself up in Adel of Beth-maachab, where he soon paid the price of his treason, for when the town was besieged by David's troops, a wise

woman of the place inquired of Joab what they sought ; and being told that the traitor Sheba was there, she took counsel with the people of the place, and had Sheba beheaded, and his head thrown over the wall, when the besieging army left the place and returned to Jerusalem. Although David was from time to time reminded of his sins, by the return of frequent trials, yet the Lord was graciously pleased to remove them, for which cause he had abundant reason to say, *“I will sing of mercy and judgment : unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.”* (Psalm ci. 1.) *“Lord hear my voice ; let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared ; I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.”* (Psalm cxxx.)





*The good-old King at length appears
Press'd with a heavy weight of years,
And soon the monarch lays his head
With the renown'd and mighty dead.*

THE DEATH OF DAVID.

BEFORE CHRIST 1015 YEARS.

“For Israel’s errors to atone,
 My son, with wisdom guard thy throne;
 To God a sacred temple raise,
 And thou and thine attend his praise.”

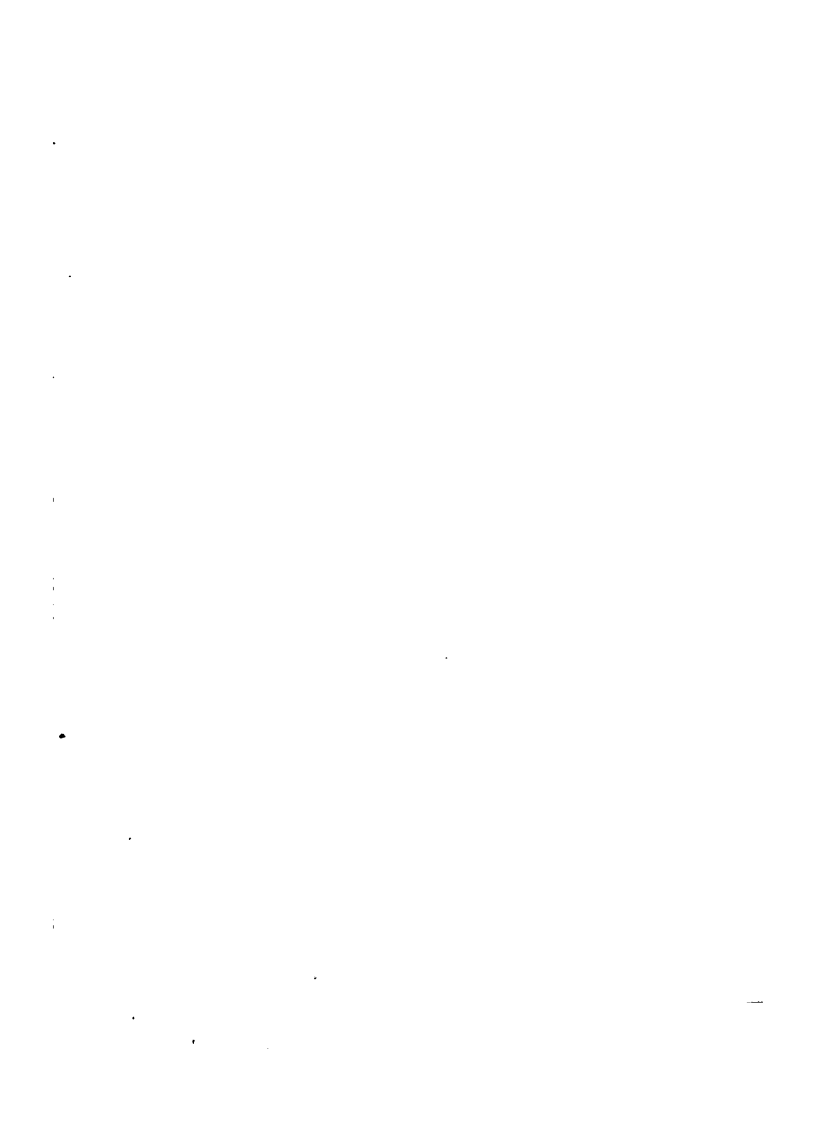
WE have a beautiful psalm of thanksgiving which David made to the Lord for his powerful deliverance and manifold blessings. It well becomes us to notice with gratitude all the favours God bestows upon us; and to exclaim as this pious king does in the 103rd Psalm, “*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy Name.*” In the 2d Sam. xxiii. we observe this man after God’s own heart, drawing still nearer to the close of his pious race, and hear him giving glory to God, for “*having made with him an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.*” O what a mercy it is to have the Lord as our

covenant God, and to be enabled to view all his dealings with us as the result of his love! but may we always bear in mind, that this could never have been the case but for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. We could not have been received into the favour of heaven, if the blessed Redeemer had not purchased our pardon, by shedding his own blood, and thereby reconciled God to poor sinners, who is become, for his dear Son's sake, their Father and their Friend. The 2d chapter of Kings presents us with the dying charge which David gave to Solomon: hear his language; it is the last advice of a pious parent, and therefore well worthy attention, for, though addressed to a prince, it is suited to all, and if carefully observed, will benefit all who attend to it. *“Keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and*

his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself." ♦

It is very remarkable that the patriarchs of old, when they approached the brink of eternity, had more clear notions of the Divine Being, and the extent of moral obligation, than when they were surrounded with the pleasures and enjoyments of life. Thus we find that when David was going to bid adieu to this world, he told his son that he was under an indispensable obligation to administer justice to all his subjects, without the least respect to their temporal circumstances; and besides the duties incumbent on him as a sovereign, bade him look forward to the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning the Messiah.

Happy they who are blest with pious parents to bring them up in the fear of the Lord, and who are enabled to appreciate the end of the righteous, whereby they may be encouraged to live to God, that their end may be peace. Now David was gathered to his fathers, having reigned forty years, and been a blessing to the people over whom God had placed him. Thus we reach the end of another great and good man ; it is pleasing and profitable to trace the history of such characters in the sacred volume ; we see their virtues, and we see their vices, in that faithful book ; we discover the grace of God in their lives, and we view the support granted them in death. May we be enabled to follow their holy example, and then we shall, at last, "*sit down with them in the kingdom of God.*" (Matthew viii. 11.)





*The monarch now the mother saw,
Nature he knew, and nature's law;
And while her heart with joy o'errun,
He to her arms return'd her son.*

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON,

BEFORE CHRIST 1014 YEARS.

The prayer of Solomon is heard,
His reign to Israel is endear'd;
By all the earth his worth admir'd,
Whom God with wisdom has inspir'd !

THE people of Israel were blessed in having so wise and good a man as Solomon to succeed David on the throne. In 1 Kings iii. 3, we are told that "*Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father.*" In the 2d Samuel xii. 24, we read that the Lord loved Solomon. O what inestimable blessing is the love of God ! It is the source of every mercy we enjoy, and only as we are beloved of God, are we enabled to love him as we ought, for St. John has told us, "*we love him because he first loved us.*" (1 John iv. 19.)

Solomon had been but a very short time on the throne, before the Lord was pleased to appear unto him in a dream by night, and ask what he should give him. To this gracious and condescending question, Solomon returned a wise answer ; he asked not wealth, or honour, but he entreated for an understanding heart, by which he might be qualified to rule over the people committed to his charge ; this request pleased the Lord, and he gave him not only wisdom, but riches and honour, surpassing all that were ever possessed before his time, or since. Though God does not in our days appear to his people in the way that he did in ancient times, yet by his word, he is ever saying, "*Ask, and it shall be given you,*" (Matthew vii. 7.) and we may be assured that "*no good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly.*" (Ps. lxxxiv. 11.)

May we, therefore, approach the throne of grace, and make known all our requests to the Almighty, pleading the promises of his word and the merits of his dear Son, and we shall, in his own time, have reason to acknowledge that he is a God hearing and answering prayer. We are not forbid to tell all our wants to Him ; but when our cry is for salvation, for a wise and understanding heart, we may conclude that such a petition is more pleasing in his sight.

Solomon soon gave a great and striking proof of his wisdom, for a case that required penetration was brought before him. Two women, having each a child, appeared in his presence; one of the children had died, and the woman in whose bosom it died, arose in the night, and removed the living child from the bosom of the other mother,

and left her dead infant in its stead; she discovered the cheat in the morning, but could not recover the living child without appealing to the throne; and Solomon, by his wisdom, soon discovered the mother, by her love for the child; for he ordered the child to be divided, and to be given half to one woman, and half to the other, to which the pretended mother assented; but the mother of the child entreated it might not be slain, for she would rather see it in the possession of another, if it might be spared, than for it to be destroyed: this showed she was the real mother, and Solomon, convinced of the fact, ordered the child to be given to her. *“And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to do judgment. (1 Kings iii. 28.)*



*With glowing gladness in his breast
The monarch then the people bless'd:
All day with fire the altar shines,
And in vast joy the nation joins.*

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.

BEFORE CHRIST 1008 YEARS.

The last fond charge by David given,—
“To raise a sacred house to Heaven ;”
By Solomon in mind is borne,
And he the Temple did adorn.

IT was the intention of David to build a house for the Lord; but while the good intention was accepted, the execution of that great work was reserved for Solomon, as we read in 2d book of Samuel, chapter vii. ; and the time to commence that building having arrived, we have in 1 Kings, chap. vi. and vii. an account of it. It was in the fourth year of Solomon's reign that he began to build the temple ; some time having been expended in making provision for so great an undertaking, for every thing was so com-

pletely prepared before it was brought to the spot, that not any tool of iron was used in the building.

This edifice was very large and splendid: the walls were of stone, most of the timber used was cedar, and there was scarce any end to the quantity of gold used in the various articles of furniture, and in gilding the walls and floor. Never was so costly an undertaking before, and so much was Solomon's heart in the work, that it was completed in little more than seven years. In the 8th chapter we have the dedication of this magnificent building; Solomon assembled all the great men of the land, and brought up the ark of the Lord to its new abode, where the priests deposited it in the most holy place; which being done, the Lord graciously testified his approbation by filling the house with his glory.

Then Solomon proceeded to bless all the congregation and acknowledged, in the presence of God, his goodness in raising him to the throne, and in enabling him to build a house to his praise. Having done this, he spread forth his hands towards heaven, in the presence of all the congregation, and invoked the blessing of God on that house, and entreated that he would always hear prayer from thence, acknowledging, with holy surprise, the wonderful condescension of God.—“ *But will God indeed dwell on the earth ? Behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee ; how much less this house that I have builded !*” (1 Kings viii. 27.) But God did, in an especial manner, put his name there ; and blessed be his holy name, his temples are not without his presence in our days, though we do not see

his visible glory, for he is near all those that wait in his house faithfully ; he affords them his presence, he rejoices their hearts, and makes them to behold his power and his glory in his sanctuary, (Psalm lxiii. 2.)

If Solomon wondered at the gracious condescension of God in putting his name in so glorious an house, how ought we to wonder, and adore his holy name when he says to us, "*Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which we have of God, and ye are not your own ? For ye are bought with a price ; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*" (1 Corinthians vi. 19, 20.)



*From Sheba a distant report
Of Solomon's glory and fame,
Invited the Queen to his court,
But all was out done when she came.*

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA'S VISIT.

BEFORE CHRIST 990 YEARS.

Attracted by King Solomon's spread fame,
Rich Sheba's queen from bless'd Arabia came ;
Prepar'd, as was the custom of her age,
To prove his skill with problems deep and sage.

THE wisdom of Solomon soon spread far and wide, and having reached the ears of the Queen of Sheba, (supposed to be Abyssinia, which lay south of Canaan) she resolved to visit him, that she might not only gratify her curiosity, but learn something profitable, by conversing with so great a man ; and she came like a queen, for she brought a grand equipage with her, a train of servants, and camels bearing spices, precious stones, and gold, as a present to Solomon.

Having at length reached Jerusalem, and beheld the magnificent buildings which he had raised, the order and splendour of his household, and having proved his wisdom by hard questions, she was so affected with what she saw and heard, that there was no more spirit in her; she was filled with inexpressible surprise and wonder, and she exclaimed, "*It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and thy wisdom; howbeit I believed not the words until I came, and mine eyes had seen it; and, behold, the half was not told me; thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel; because the Lord loved Is-*

rael for ever, therefore may he thee king, to do judgment and justice." (1 Kings x. 6—9.)

How beautiful is the language of the Queen! she acknowledged how far every thing exceeded her expectations, she could not but think them happy that were allowed the honour and privilege to be always near so great a king as Solomon, and she acknowledged how great the favour of God had been in raising him to the throne.

A few profitable improvements may be made upon this history. The Queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's wisdom, and she came to him for instruction. Have we not often heard of the Lord Jesus Christ, that greater than Solomon? Is he not spoken of in his gospel, which is preached so much in our happy land? How then

shall we stand excused if we do not inquire after him who is able to make us wise to salvation?

In Matthew xii. 42, our blessed Redeemer told the Jews, that the Queen of Sheba would rise up in judgment against them, for she came a long journey to hear the wisdom of Solomon, while they neglected his heavenly instruction. O let us beware, lest she rise up in judgment against us also! If the Queen of Sheba was so overcome with Solomon's wisdom and glory, how shall we be affected if we are permitted to surround the Redeemer's throne in glory; we shall, indeed, acknowledge that not one half, no, nor the thousandth part, of his glory, had been told us on earth. May that be our happy lot at last, for his mercy's sake, Amen.

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*He worships, to oblige the dame,
The idol God from whence she came:
To please his fair Zidonion spouse,
At her Ashtoreth's shrine he bows.*

SOLOMON'S IDOLATRY.

BEFORE CHRIST 983 YEARS.

Fatal prosperity ! how fond, how blind !
 Thou sweetest, deadliest poison to mankind ;
 Behold his wisdom sunk, his lustre fade,
 His glory clouded, in how deep a shade !

ON reading so much of Solomon's wisdom, his greatness, riches, and honour ; that God loved him, and made his fame to spread in all directions, who would have expected to hear that his heart turned from God ; that in his advancing years he should become a fool and an idolater ?

Lord, what is man, even the very wisest and best, without thy preserving grace ? But how happened it that Solomon became so degenerated ? The word of God, which is faithful in recounting the defects as well as the fair parts of man's character, tells us

that he loved many strange women, of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; that when he was old, they turned away his heart after other gods; that he went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites; that he built an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, and for Molech, the god of the children of Ammon: and, as we might have expected, the Lord was angry with Solomon, and threatened to rend the kingdom from him; he also raised up enemies to make the remainder of his days uneasy to him. When he kept near to God every thing prospered, but when he forsook the Lord, and neglected his ordinances, days of darkness and distress followed.

God had, by his law, forbidden kings to multiply wives, lest they should turn their

hearts away from him. (Deuteronomy xvii. 17.) This Solomon did to a very extensive degree, and he proved how wise and gracious the Lord was in giving such a command, and that had he complied with it, it would have been better for him. Surely the Lord takes more care for us than we take for ourselves, and happy are they who are enabled to fear him and keep his commandments.

We may observe that wisdom itself will not keep the heart from sin ; for there never lived a wiser man than king Solomon. It is the grace of God, and that only, that can keep us to salvation ; and if God brings us through all the dangerous snares of youth, we shall still need his guidance, even when grey hairs are upon our heads ; we shall find then that nothing but divine support can carry us safely through.

May the Lord guide us by his counsel to the last breath of life, and then receive us to glory. (Psalm lxxiii. 24.) Though God was angry with Solomon, and threatened to rend the kingdom from his house, yet he would not do it in his days, for David his servant's sake. We are not told what effect the anger and reproof of God had upon Solomon, but there is reason to hope he did repent, and find mercy, yet it is not communicated to us; for while in some instances, such as David and Manasseh, we are informed they found mercy, that we may be encouraged not to despair of being pardoned, on returning to the Lord: yet the repentance of Solomon is not recorded, that we may not presume. O may we have grace to take timely warning before it be too late for ever.



*The King replies, depart in peace,
I shall consider on the case:
The third day hence you may return,
And then my answer you shall learn.*

TEN TRIBES REVOLT.**BEFORE CHRIST 975 YEARS.**

The son of Solomon succeeds,
And Israel with oppression bleeds ;
Ten tribes create another king,
And strife and deadly tumults bring.

BECAUSE Solomon departed from the Lord, the Almighty was pleased to raise up, among others, to render Solomon's last days uneasy, Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, Solomon's servant ; to this man, the prophet Abijah foretold, that God would rend ten tribes from the house of David and give them to him ; but this promise to Jeroboam was not for any good thing in his heart ; he was a very wicked character ; but God would do it to punish the apostacy of Solomon ; and the Lord generally chooses

bad men to be the instruments of inflicting his justice on those that revolt from him, making use of their inclinations to answer his wise purposes ; but God at the same time gave Jeroboam warning, that only as he acted right could he expect to prosper, (1 Kings xi. 38.)

Solomon having heard that Jeroboam was to succeed him in ruling part of the kingdom, sought to kill him, and Jeroboam fled into Egypt for protection, where he remained until the death of Solomon. When Solomon died he left but one son, named Rehoboam, and by his conduct he soon showed that he did not inherit his father's wisdom, and was but little calculated to succeed to the throne. All Israel assembled at Shechem, to make him king ; but, instead of confirming him in the throne, his folly showed itself so great on the occasion,

that the people rent the kingdom in part from him.

The representatives of the tribes, and Jeroboam among them, entreated to have the taxes lessened, under which they suffered ; they complained that Solomon had made their yoke grievous, and prayed that his son and successor would make it light.

Rehoboam required three days to consult with those about him, as to what answer he should return to the request of his people ; the old men, that had stood before Solomon his father, advised him to speak kindly to the applicants ; but he forsook their counsel, and preferred the advice of the young men, who had been brought up with him, who counselled him to return a severe answer, and to threaten an increase rather than a diminution of the sufferings

of which the people complained. When all Israel knew the mind of Rehoboam, it was the signal for revolt, and ten tribes immediately separated from him, leaving only Judah and Benjamin under his government, who continued faithful to the house of David, while those who forsook Rehoboam chose Jeroboam as their king.

Thus was the word of the Lord brought to pass, with which he threatened Solomon for his apostacy. It was an instance of great folly in Rehoboam that he preferred the advice of the young and uninformed, to that of the aged and well-instructed. May the Lord guide us by his grace to make choice of good and virtuous companions, and experienced advisers, as our happiness and comfort greatly depends thereon, both in this world and that which is to come.



*Against God's will the prophet stays,
And dearly for his folly pays;
For by a roaring lion slain,
He lay expos'd on Bethel's plain.*

THE DISOBEDIENT PROPHET.

BEFORE CHRIST 974 YEARS.

"Eat not," said god, "with Jeroboam,
Nor in the land he sways;"
And thence the prophet returning home,
The high behest obeys,

NO sooner was Jeroboam seated on the throne, (his principal town being Shechem, in the tribe of Ephraim) than he took measures to prevent the people ever returning to Jerusalem, for he concluded they would wish to repair to the temple to worship, and there would then be danger of their returning to their allegiance to Rehoboam; he therefore *"took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto the people, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem to worship; behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt:"*

heset one up in Dan, and the other in Bethel, which became a sin and snare to the people, and led them to idolatry. (1 Kings xii. 28, &c.) He set up these calves as tokens of the divine presence: but it was a gross breach of the second commandment ; and so depraved is the human heart, that if at first the people worshipped God, through these signs, they soon worshipped the calves themselves.

God was highly displeased with Jero-boam for leading his people to idolatry, and he sent a messenger to reprove the king for his wickedness, who found him standing by the altar, before the golden calf at Bethel, offering incense. This messenger prophesied in the name of the Lord, and foretold that at a future day God would raise up Josiah to take vengeance upon the idolatrous priests by burning their bones upon that

altar, and overthrow the wretched idolatry of the people ; and in the 2d Kings xxiii. 15, &c. is to be found the full accomplishment of this prediction ; and the prophet gave a sign that this should come to pass, which was, that the altar at which Jeroboam then stood should be rent, and the ashes poured out, which immediately took place.

When the king heard this prediction, and saw this sign, he put forth his hand, crying, Lay hold of him ; and his hand was dried up ; upon which he entreated the man of God to pray for him, and his hand was restored. For this act, Jeroboam offered him a reward, and invited him home to his house, but he had received a command from God, not to stay ; he therefore departed, but a false prophet went after, and told him that an angel had instructed him to fetch him

back ; in this he lied unto him, nevertheless the other believed him and returned ; but, while eating, was informed, that for disobeying the divine command given to him, he should meet with a judgment ; and so it happened, for on leaving Bethel again a lion met him and slew him, but did not eat his carcase.

This was a lamentable circumstance, that so good a man should be deceived and then destroyed ; but how could he think that God would say one thing to one prophet, and another thing to another ! He was destroyed and wicked Jeroboam was spared. Blessed be God, there is another world where the righteous and the wicked will meet with their just deserts ; and though the righteous may be punished here for a warning to others, yet will their souls be saved through divine grace.





*The Queen disguis'd to Shiloh goes:
Her, e'er she came, the prophet knows:
And tho' grown blind by age, he cries,
Where is the need of this disguise!*

ABIJAH'S CHARACTER &c.

BEFORE CHRIST 960 YEARS.

Though blind was Abijah, yet given
 To him the visions were of Heaven;
 Advanced in years, yet firmly bold,
 The dread decrees of God he told.

THE judgment which the prophet had denounced against idolatry, and consequently against Jeroboam himself, who was the author of this idolatry, yet we find that he returned not from his evil way, but pursued his wretched course, in opposition even to God himself. He made of the lowest of the people priests of the high places which he had set up; *"And this thing became sin to the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and destroy it from off the face of the earth,"* (1 Kings xiii. 34.) He thought

by setting up the calves, that he should secure the people to himself, and the crown to his family ; but he took sinful methods to accomplish his purposes, and the consequence was, that his family, after a time, were by degrees cut off.

How can we hope to prosper if our course is a sinful one ? for God is holy and just ; sin must therefore ever be hateful to him. But the Lord would not suffer Jero-boam to go on in sin, without letting him know he was doing wrong, and so giving him warning, for he laid his son Abijah upon the bed of sickness : this touched the king to the heart, and though he would not consult God's servants about his own soul, and how he might obtain the favour and blessing of God, yet when his son was ill, he sent to inquire what would be the result of this sickness ; indeed, his wife her-

self went in disguise, to learn of the prophet Ahijah, what should become of the child.

Though Ahijah was blind, yet he was favoured with the visions of the Almighty, and received intimation from heaven of the visitor that was coming, and of her errand; when therefore he heard the sound of her feet, he said “*Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam, why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings.*” (1 Kings xiv. 6.)

He sent her back to Jeroboam with an account of the awful things that were in store for himself and his family, because of the greatness of his wickedness in the sight of that God who had exalted him, and done such great things for him; and as an earnest that all things threatened should take place, his beloved son should immediately

die; but it was in mercy to the child that he should now be cut off, "*for in him there was found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel.*" (verse 13.)

Let the young particularly notice the circumstances attending this young prince. Though young, he was sick unto death, and so may you soon be; yet there was some good thing in his heart; entreat the Lord to give you his grace, that one good thing, that needful thing; and if you are living to God, be encouraged, for he notices it. Give him all the praise for the work of grace in your heart; and if he calls you home while young in life, you will be carried safe to his eternal kingdom and glory.



*When rain long withheld from the earth
Occasion'd a famine of bread;
The Prophet secure from the dearth,
By ravens was constantly fed.*

ELIJAH FED BY RAVENS.**BEFORE CHRIST 910 YEARS.**

By Cherith's brook Elijah strays,
And Ravens on the wing;
As morn and eve the prophet prays,
Food in abundance bring.

THE tribes of Israel had revolted from the house of David, and we read of much that is distressing as respects the great depravity that was to be found among them. Idolatry sadly prevailed, the true God was neglected, the throne was often changing its owner, and the kings in succession were many of them great sinners in the sight of the Almighty; this was particularly the case with Israel: in Judah things were better under the reign of Asa, who sat on the throne many years.

At this period, a very striking character is introduced to our notice, in the person of

Elijah the Tishbite, of whom it has been remarked, that although he was one of the children of Israel, and the most eminent prophet in that age, yet his parents are never mentioned ; and the reason assigned for this omission is, that, as he had been designed by God not to die in the ordinary course of nature, like other men, so there was no necessity for mentioning the names of those mortals from whom he sprung.

By the mouth of this favoured prophet, the Almighty made known to Ahab, who was now king of Israel, that there should not be rain or dew for three years ; which would bring a famine with it, and this for the punishment of the iniquity that so greatly abounded ; but though the land was to be thus visited with judgment, yet God would take care of his servant Elijah, and in the time of famine he should be fed.

The Lord ordered him to hide himself by the brook Cherith, near Jordan, where the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and again in the evening: the brook supplying him with drink. The Lord directed Elijah to hide himself; this was a great judgment to the people of the land, for though they felt the direful effects of the want of rain, they could not now entreat the prayers of the prophet, for he was not to be found; thus do men by sin throw away their mercies.

It was a most striking instance of the kind providence of God, in feeding his prophet in so singular a manner—that ravens, of all birds, should be employed, who are birds of prey, and were more likely to steal his food, than convey it to him; but it clearly proves to us, that all creatures are indeed under the control of him who made

them ; and rather than God's people shall want, he can employ birds of prey to bring them wholesome food.

How much happier was Elijah, dwelling thus alone, and a daily pensioner on the bounty of heaven, than was wicked king Ahab, though on a throne, possessed of all the riches of the land, but labouring under the judgments of Almighty God ! It is better to be the children of God, however humble our lot, than to have all that this world calls good and great, and have the frown of heaven with it. May we be content with such things as we have, and learn to be thankful to God for all his mercies ; in every dark season may we trust in him, and exercise a humble reliance upon his providence, for he has promised, "*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*" (Hebrews xiii. 5.)



*By the poor widow's oil and meal
Elijah was sustain'd;
Tho' small the stock it lasted well,
For God the store maintain'd*

THE BARREL OF MEAL AND OIL.

BEFORE CHRIST 908 YEARS.

The widow by her ready faith affords ;
The great event fulfill'd the prophet's words ;
Thus was her hospitable bounty bless'd,
The more she gave the more she still possess'd.

ELIJAH had dwelt some time by the brook Cherith, and the water thereof was all dried up, because there was no rain; God was then pleased to provide for him in a way still more miraculous; he commanded him to arise and go to Zarephath in Zidon, where he had commanded a widow woman to sustain him.

Elijah accordingly went, and having arrived at the gate of the city, he beheld the woman, who was gathering sticks, whom he entreated to fetch him a little water, and

a morsel of bread; but he learned by her reply, that she was not in a condition to afford him support, for her answer was, "*As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse; and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die.*" (1 Kings xvii. 12.) And Elijah said unto her, "*Fear not, go and do as thou hast said, but make me a little cake thereof first; for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, the barrel of meal shall not waste, nor shall the cruse of oil fail, until rain be sent on the earth; and so it came to pass, and she, and the prophet, and her house, did eat many days.*" (verses 13—15.)

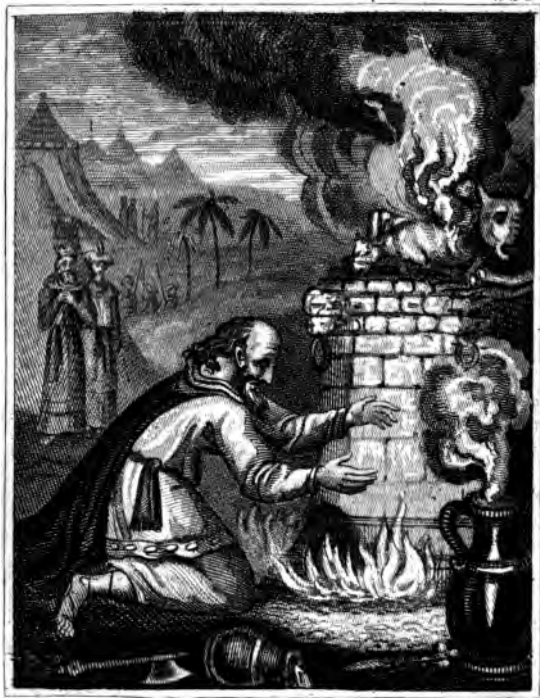
What a great mercy it is for the Lord's people, that he is not confined to any particular manner or means, by which to do

them good ! The brook dried up, but God had made provision for his servant elsewhere ; he was now to be supported by a widow, and the Lord directed him where to go for his future supply.

When he reached the appointed place, he found the person with whom he was to be a guest, was a poor widow ; and by the account which she gave of her circumstances, seemed very unable to bear such an additional burden in this time of need ; but the Almighty, who could make ravens bring food, which was contrary to their nature, could multiply the poor widow's means that his prophet might be fed ; and so he did, for all things are possible with God. (Mark x. 27.) At the word of Elijah, by the almighty power of God, the barrel of meal did not waste, nor the cruse of oil fail, till the days of famine were over.

It came to pass, after these things, the widow's son fell sick and died; and now Elijah was favoured with an opportunity of making her some return for her kindness, for he entreated the Lord for the child, and the Lord was pleased to restore it to life again. "*And the woman said unto Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.*" (1 Kings xvii. 24.) This was a wonderful instance of the power of God Almighty; it was a great honour to the prayer of Elijah, and the best return that he could make for the poor widow's kindness: no doubt he was pleased thus to show his gratitude. May we never be unthankful, but endeavour to think aright of every favour shown to us, and try to make proper and suitable returns.





*Sent by the king, the prophets came,
But could not make the altar flame;
All day they try. Elijah prays,
And all the altar round him blaze.*

ELIJAH'S SACRIFICE.**BEFORE CHRIST 906 YEARS.**

"Your Idol sleeps," Elijah cries,
"And wots not your sacrifice,
Behold! my God his presence lends!"
The sacred fire from Heaven descends.

THE Lord was pleased to bless Israel again by sending rain, and remove the famine from the land: he directed Elijah to go and present himself to Ahab.

The prophet accordingly went to show himself to the king, and by the way met with Obadiah, who was governor of Ahab's house; he was a good man, and when Queen Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, he hid an hundred of them in caves, and fed them with bread and water, which proved him a servant of the Lord; for in

the time of so grievous a famine, even bread and water was almost invaluable; and had he not feared the Lord, and loved his prophets, he would not have undertaken so great and serious a charge.

To this good man Elijah presented himself, and by him sent a message to Ahab, that he wished to see him; to this message the king attended, and having met the prophet, he charged him with being the troubler of Israel; but Elijah could, and did charge the calamities of the land upon him.

“It is thou, and thy father’s house, that have troubled Israel, because ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and have followed Baalim.” (1 Kings xviii. 18.) He was not afraid of Ahab, for he was sent with God’s message, and his Master in heaven would bear him out in all he said; he, therefore, boldly reproved wicked Ahab for

his idolatry, and told him that was the cause of all the evil that had befallen Israel.

In addition to this bold charge, he also desired Ahab to gather all the false prophets unto mount Carmel, which was done ; and Elijah having met them, and the people who assembled with them, he asked how long they would halt between two opinions ; if the Lord was God they ought to serve him, and if Baal was God, then they should serve him ; but he would put the matter to rest by a trial, in their presence, that they might be convinced that the Lord was God alone.

Elijah, therefore, directed them to prepare a bullock and sacrifice it to Baal, and put no fire under it, and he would prepare and offer another bullock, in like manner, to Jehovah, and the God who answered by fire should be their God ; to this they agreed,

and very earnest they were in their prayers to Baal, but their deaf god heard not ; and having long prayed in vain, Elijah called the people near to witness what would be the result of his sacrifice ; and to convince them there was no cheat in it, he had a quantity of water poured all around the altar ; he then called upon Almighty God, saying, "*Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their hearts back again,* (1 Kings xviii. 37.) who sent fire down, which not only destroyed the bullock, but the stones of the altar, and licked up the water ; this was a convincing proof to the people that Baal was not God. "*And when all the people saw it they fell on their faces, and said, The Lord, he is the God ; the Lord, he is the God.*" (chapter xviii. 39.)





*The elders with the Queen comply'd,
And innocent poor Naboth dy'd.
His sons his innocence declar'd.
And soon their father's fate they shar'd.*

NABOTH'S VINEYARD.

BEFORE CHRIST 889 YEARS.

Lean avarice, unblest'd amidst her store,
Tastes not her own, and yet still gapes for more,
On Naboth's vineyard Ahab casts his eye,
And to enlarge his garden fain would try.

ELIJAH having convinced the people that the Lord was the true God, he commanded that the prophets of Baal should be slain, which immediately took place. After this, the Lord was pleased to send rain upon the earth, and to restore those blessings of fruit and vegetation, which for full three years had been wanting. To Almighty God we are indebted for all our comforts ; if he withhold the fruitful showers, the land soon becomes a barren wilderness.

Ahab, instead of being affected by the

proof which Elijah had obtained of the Lord being God alone, and instead of returning thanks for the blessing of rain, excited Jezebel's anger against the Lord's prophet, for destroying the lying prophets of Baal, and consequently she resolved to cut off Elijah in revenge, which induced him to fly and hide himself in the wilderness; where being fed by the ministration of an angel, he went in the strength thereof forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God, (1 Kings xix. 8.) where the Lord was pleased to meet him, and give him instructions about his future proceedings; at the same time assuring him, that though he thought he stood alone, as the worshipper of God, there were seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed to Baal. (verse 18.)

Naboth, the Jezreelite, having a vineyard which lay near the Ahab's palace, Ahab

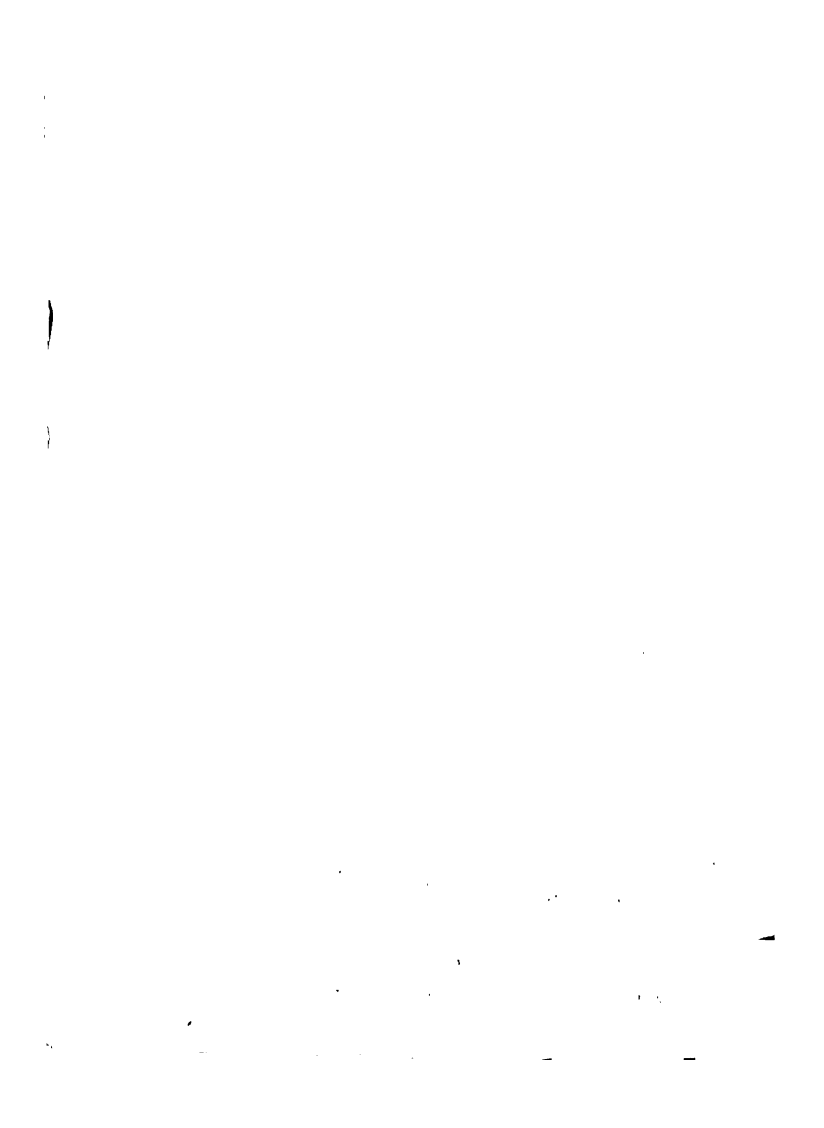
coveted it, thinking it would be a great addition to his royal estate ; he therefore offered to give Naboth either another vineyard for it, or money equal to its worth ; but Naboth declined parting with the inheritance of his fathers, which filled Ahab with such discontent, that he lay down upon his bed and would eat no bread.

Queen Jezebel observing him so miserable, and learning the cause, contrived by a dreadfully wicked device to have Naboth cut off, that Ahab might seize upon the vineyard which he so much coveted ; for she sent orders to the elders and nobles of Jezreel, directing them to bring Naboth to trial for blasphemy, of which he had never been guilty ; but these wretched elders obeyed the orders, they attended to the false witness of two wicked men, *children of Belial, and sat before him, and the men of*

Belial witnessed against him, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king : then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died. (1 Kings xxi. 13.) They then sent word to Jezebel what was done, who informed Ahab, and he went and took possession of the vineyard.

The righteous God, whose eye pervades all the earth, saw what was going on, and sent Elijah to Ahab with a solemn denunciation of judgment upon him and his house for this vile conduct.

O beware of covetousness, and watch against discontent ; endeavour to be thankful for what you have, and if you are denied any one thing that you think would make you happy, rest satisfied that it is denied you in mercy, by that gracious God who knows what is best for you.





*His useless mantle down the prophet threw,
And vanish'd from his great disciples view:
The falling robe Elijah used to wear,
Elisha caught, and treasur'd up with care.*

ELIJAH TRANSLATED TO HEAVEN.

Steeds and chariots of fire
 Elijah's hopes and fears inspire ;—
 To Heaven the man of God ascends,—
 A whirlwind on his course attends.

BEFORE CHRIST 895 YEARS.

AHAB, having obtained possession of Naboth's vineyard, by murdering its owner, God sent him word by Elijah, that as dogs licked Naboth's blood, so should dogs lick his blood; and that dogs should eat Jezebel by the walls of Jezreel; (1 Kings xxi. 19, &c.) It demands our attention to observe the exact fulfilment of these awful predictions, for no word of God shall fall to the ground.

A short time after this, Ahab went with his forces to make war with the king of

Syria, to regain Ramothgilead from him ; while in the battle, a certain man drew a bow at a venture (but no doubt it was guided by an unerring hand) and smote Ahab, upon which he was carried out of the host, and died ; his chariot being washed in the pool of Samaria, the dogs licked his blood.

In the 2d Kings, chapters ix. and x. we read of the other part of the prophecy against Ahab's house fulfilled, his sons being slain, and of Jezebel thrown out of a window, by order of Jehu, whom God had raised up to carry into effect his judgments against this family, when the dogs feasted upon her body. Thus we observe the certain consequences of sinning against the living God ; it brings his heavy displeasure down, and will prove our ruin, both here and hereafter.

Through all the Old Testament, we find

only one individual taken up to heaven without passing through the pains of death, until the instance of the prophet Elijah, whom God was pleased to translate to glory, as he had done Enoch. (Genesis v. 24.)

It appears Elijah had intimation of the purpose of the Lord, and wished to be alone, for he endeavoured to prevail upon Elisha, who was his servant, and whom God intended should succeed him in his work, to leave him, but Elisha would not, which Elijah perceived, and he inquired what he should do for him before he was taken away; to which Elisha replied, "*I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.*" Shortly after, as they went on, and talked, behold there appeared a chariot and horses of fire, and parted them asunder. In this chariot Elijah went up to heaven, thus becoming a type of what was to take place.

when Jesus Christ the king of glory, having finished the work of redemption, was to ascend on high, leading captivity captive.

God was pleased in these darker days of the world, to give this fresh proof of the existence of man beyond the present life, which would encourage his people to look forward with hope and joy. Elisha obtained a rich blessing by attending his master to the last. It is good for us to keep near those whom the Lord favours and blesses; our souls may be the better for their good advice and their prayers. And it will be well for us, if, when God sends for us, that we are, through grace, as ready to depart as Elijah was; although it is our destiny to go down to the grave before we can ascend to glory.



*At Shunam's hospitable dome,
They oft beheld Elisha come;
And when the matron's infant dies
He prays, and soon beholds him rise.*

ELISHA'S MIRACLES.

BEFORE CHRIST 894 YEARS.

To Elisha new deeds are given
Of grace, that shew the power of Heaven ;
The widow now to want allied,
Is with abundant oil supplied.

WE may perceive, that according to the prayer of Elisha, the spirit of God, which rested upon Elijah, did also rest upon himself. In the 2d King, chapter iv. we read of several miracles which he wrought; a poor woman, widow of one of the sons of the prophets, cried unto him for help, informing him that her husband died in debt, and the creditors were going to take her two sons, who were the support and comfort of her widowed state, to be bondmen. It was a piteous case, and Elisha soon give

her relief, by putting her in a way to pay her debts ; for having learned she had a pot of oil in the house, he desired her to borrow many empty vessels from her neighbours, and pour the oil into them, which she continued doing till they were all filled ; she sold the oil, paid her debts, and lived upon the remainder. This was a miracle indeed

As this woman went in the time of her distress, to one who loved the sons of the prophets, who was himself the greatest prophet then living, and from him obtained relief ; so may we be enabled in all times of our sorrow, to carry our wants to the great Prophet of his church, the Lord Jesus Christ, who indeed loves his own, "*and of his fulness we shall receive grace for grace.*" (John i. 16,)

Elisha had received much kindness from a noble woman in Shunem, where he often

lodged, who had a son in her old age by the special favour of God, and this favourite child having fallen sick and died, Elisha had the pleasure of raising him to life, and when the Shunammite found her son was restored, "*She fell at Elisha's feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son and went out ;*" this was another striking proof that the Lord was with him.

After this, we read of a dearth in Gilgal, where he was with the sons of the prophets, whose food, consisted of pottage of herbs ; but which, when served up, was discovered to have some noxious herb in it, hurtful in its nature ; this being made known to him, he cast some meal into the food, and rendered it wholesome.

Another miracle followed this ; he fed one hundred men with a small supply of bread, and there was enough and to spare. Thus

the Lord gave evidence to those that attended Elisha, that he was a prophet of his own sending; that while those who sincerely followed him might have the comfort and benefit arising from his miracles, and those who despised him, or were serving false gods, might be left without excuse, for they had a heavenly teacher in the midst of them, and one who could teach them the good ways of the Lord.

In the several miracles wrought by Elisha, we ought to admire the power of Almighty God and his goodness to his people, in order to bring them over from idolatry, and to improve the example in our own lives and conduct, by abandoning the vices and follies of this world, for the more substantial enjoyment which in his great mercy he has promised to all those who walk in his ways, and keep his commandments.

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11



*He by his foolish pride
Had almost miss'd a cure;
Howe'er at length he try'd,
And found the method sure.*

NAAMAN'S LEPROSY CURED.

BEFORE CHRIST 894 YEARS.

To Elisha the leper goes,—
“Speed to where Jordan’s water flows,
And wash seven times, nor wash in vain,
That done, your flesh shall come again.”

“NOW Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria, he was also a mighty man of valour, but he was a leper.” (2 Kings v. 1.) How great does Naaman appear in the first part of this account; but how was all his glory eclipsed, and all his happiness marred, in being a leper! Not all his splendour, nor his power or influence at court, could save Naaman from this humiliating affliction.

when God, for his own wise purposes, thought proper to lay his hand heavy upon him.

His case is like that of every man living; however great, however rich or noble, after all, *he is a sinner*. But Naaman did not always remain a leper; he had in his house a little Israelitish maid, who waited on Naaman's wife, and she said to her mistress, "*Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.*" (verse 3.) This was told to the king of Syria, who sent a letter to the king of Israel, that he might have Naaman healed.

The king, on reading this letter, thought the king of Syria meditated a quarrel with him, in requiring him to do that which he could not accomplish, and he was greatly perplexed in consequence; when Elisha

heard this, he begged that Naaman might be sent to him, and he should know that there was a prophet in Israel : upon which he went with all his retinue, and stood at Elisha's door, who did not go out to him, but sent him a message to go and wash seven times in Jordan, and he should be healed. This hurt Naaman's pride ; he thought the prophet would have come out to him, have treated him with respect, and recovered him immediately ; but this was not the way ; his pride required humbling, and if he would be healed, he must submit to the Lord's ruling power.

At length, upon the advice of one of his servants, he tried the way prescribed :—
“ Then went he down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God ; and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child,

and he was clean." (2 Kings v. 14.) Afterwards he returned with gratitude to Elisha, and acknowledged (though before, he was an idolater) that there was a God in Israel ; whom there is reason to hope he henceforward loved and served.

In Naaman we have our own picture : we labour under a worse disease than that of leprosy, and that is sin. ' God has been pleased to make known the way in which we can be healed, and that is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ : but like Naaman we approve of our own way best ; we want to go to heaven by our good works, till God convinces us there is no other way, but through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. Of this our souls are at length convinced ; we try, and being saved in his own way, we henceforward live to his praise and glory.

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H. KINGS III.

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THE ASSYRIAN ARMY DESTROYED.

BEFORE CHRIST 710 YEARS.

Sennacherib blasphemes the Lord,
 Thence comes, by night, a flaming sword,
 Borne by a mighty angel's hand,
 Who stays, by heaven's supreme command.

ALTHOUGH some of the kings who sat on the throne of Judah, were exceedingly wicked, yet we read of those who were, in their day and generation, a blessing to the people over whom they were placed. Among that number was Hezekiah; the son of Ahaz, an idolater; but Hezekiah was mercifully kept from that sin, and his character is highly extolled in the word of truth. *"He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, he removed the high places and cut down the groves, he trusted in the Lord, and departed not from following him; and the Lord was with him and prospered him."* (2 Kings xviii. 3, &c.)

When he had reigned fourteen years Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them : and to prevent his proceeding any further in his operations, Hezekiah purchased a peace of him with money, and for the present he did not besiege Jerusalem, the capital of Judah ; but he soon broke his promise, though purchased of him at a dear rate, and sent his army against Jerusalem.

It is a disgraceful trait in any one's character not to keep his word ; promises are sacred things, and will be scrupulously regarded by honourable minds. Sennacherib sent with his army three great generals ; the chief speaker of these three was Rabshakeh ; to treat with whom, three of Hezekiah's principal men went out of Jerusalem. To these the vaunting general addressed the most insulting language, in the hearing

of the people who were on the wall, advising them not to trust in Hezekiah, for they would be deceived.

When Hezekiah was informed of all that had passed he was greatly distressed, and sent a message to Isaiah the prophet, that he would cry to God for the land, who returned him an encouraging answer. After this, Sennacherib sent a blasphemous letter to Hezekiah, wherein he says, "*Let not thy God deceive thee,*" With this letter good Hezekiah went to the temple, and spread it before the Lord, offering at the same time a very fervent prayer for protection, which God heard, and sent Isaiah with a most gracious answer, that he had taken the cause in hand, and would defend Jerusalem. Accordingly we find that in the very next night the angel of the Lord went forth and slew in the camp of the Assyrians one

hundred and eighty-five thousand men: Sennacherib fled to his own land, and was murdered by his own sons.

Thus ended the proud boastings of this wicked invader. God did not deceive his servant Hezekiah, nor will he ever fail to encourage and bless those that put their trust in him.

The conduct of good Hezekiah in seeking advice from the prophet Isaiah, should teach us that in all circumstances of distress, we should consult with those whom we have to consider as endowed with the greatest portion of divine wisdom ; and the favourable answer which the king received, may serve to assure us that those who seek assistance from the Lord in a devout and becoming manner, will have the object of their prayer granted, as far as is consistent with their own good and the glory of God.



*King Hezekiah lay diseas'd,
 With ev'ry dang'rous symptom seiz'd.
 With languid pulse, and strength decay'd,
 With spirits sunk, and soul dismay'd.*

HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS.

BEFORE CHRIST 710 YEARS.

Sick, and by present death assail'd,
Yet Hezekiah's prayers prevail'd ;—
His cries was heard, and seen his tears,
The Lord then added fifteen years.

“ IN those days was Hezekiah sick unto death ; and the prophet Isaiah came unto him, and said, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live.” This was a most solemn message, for it is a serious thing to die: if we are prepared through divine grace, we may welcome it ; but to those who are living in sin, and enemies to God by wicked works, how terrible must the approach of the king of terrors be !

Hezekiah was now in the prime of life ; he was a great blessing to his people ; idolatry had been suppressed by him, and there was

every prospect of the land enjoying much benefit from this pious and wise government; yet he is bid to prepare for death. This seemed a mysterious providence, yet all things are ordered aright by Him who is infinite in wisdom. It is a great comfort to have our houses, our earthly affairs, in order when death comes; but happy are they who are blessed with an interest in Christ, and through his all-sufficient merits are ready for the grave.

The tidings which Isaiah brought to Hezekiah, made him cry unto the Lord and weep; not that he had reason to fear dying, but being so great a blessing to the people, and having heretofore walked in the favour of God, he entreated to be still spared, that he might continue to enjoy, on earth, the presence of God, and also still be useful in his cause among the people. To his prayer

the Lord gave a gracious answer, and bid Isaiah go and tell Hezekiah that he would heal him, that he would add unto his days fifteen years, and enable him within three days to go again to his temple; and he was directed to lay a lump of figs on the sore that he laboured under, in order to be cured. Hezekiah's disease in itself was mortal, it would have brought him to the grave; but the Lord was pleased to give such a turn to it as to prevent its otherwise necessary consequence.

The gracious interposition of God in the time of our sickness, is to be acknowledged with gratitude; observe in the 38th chapter of Isaiah, how thankfully Hezekiah uttered the Lord's praise when he was raised up. May we have grace to employ the days of health to our Maker's glory; when sickness comes, may we be humbly resigned to

his will, and if raised up again, may we feel ourselves placed under increased obligations to do the work of Him to whom we owe our health, strength, and every thing.

For Hezekiah's being visited with a very dangerous sickness after the destruction of the Assyrian army, we may learn that the Almighty did it in order to subdue his pride, and keep him constantly humble. Isaiah's warning to the king to set his house in order, should teach us, while we are in health, to settle our secular affairs; and from the miracle wrought in Hezekiah's behalf, we may observe the powerful efficacy of prayer, which can in such a manner procure the divine blessing; and from Hezekiah's heart being lifted up with pride when he showed his treasures to the Assyrian ambassadors, we may learn that even the most pious men have their lurking sins and infirmities.

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*Thrice as they cleans'd the temple round,
A copy of the law was found:
The holy book, with solemn dread,
The King commanded to be read.*

THE BOOK OF THE LAW READ.

BEFORE CHRIST 623 YEARS.

The Book of Law Hilkiah finds,
The Judah's pious prince reminds
Of deeds by predecessors done,
Of wickedness by sire and son.

JOSIAH, another pious king, was a blessing to the inhabitants of Judah. He came to the crown when he was only eight years of age, and he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord; he, like good Hezekiah, was the son of a wicked man, Amon, who did evil in the sight of the Lord. We see in this, that God can call those by his grace who were exposed to every temptation, and keep them where every iniquity prevails; surely to his grace alone must we ascribe the salvation of sinners.

In the 18th year of his reign, Josiah gave orders for the repairs of the temple, which had now stood many years, and having been thought little of by too many of the kings, whose hearts were not right with God, it now required much to be done to it, and Josiah's heart being well affected, he caused it to be performed. In the execution of this work, the book of the law was discovered in the temple, which was communicated with joy by Hilkiah the high priest to Shaphan the scribe, and by him to the king.

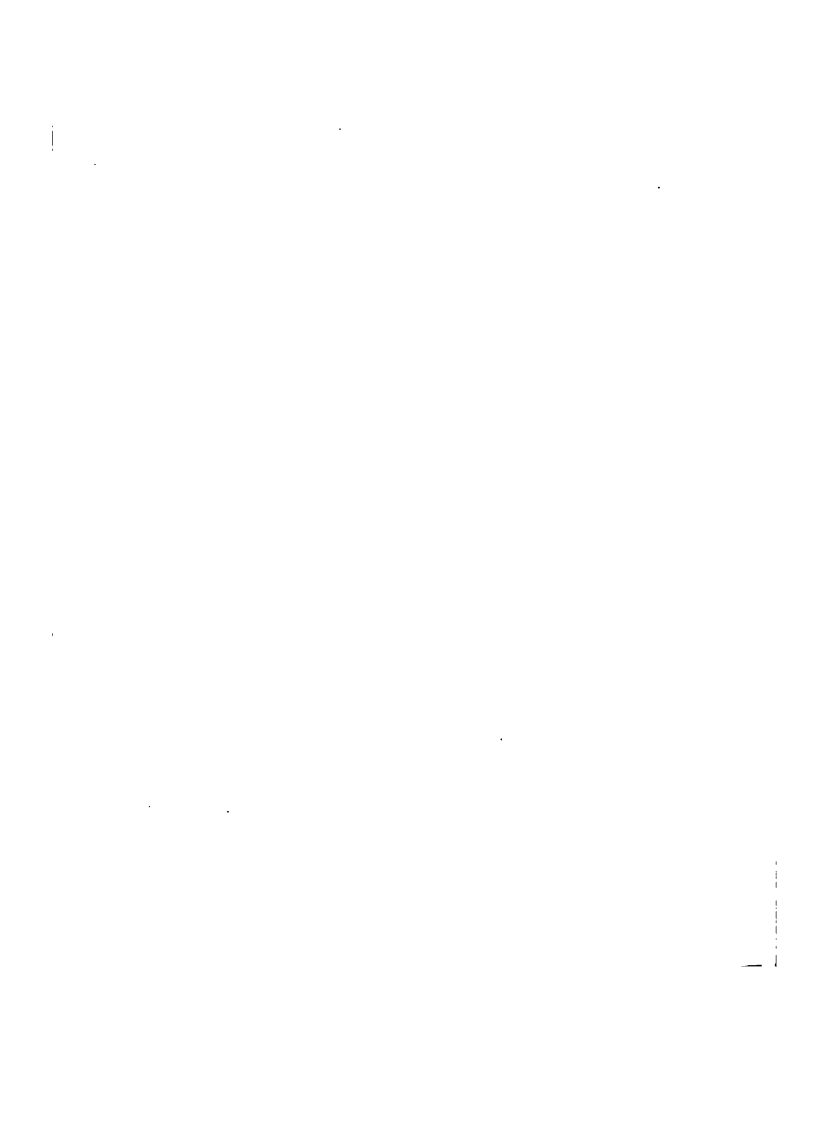
This invaluable book had either been lost through carelessness, or put out of the way by the enemies of God and true religion ; but now by a gracious providence, it was discovered. What a sad pity it is that so many slight the Holy Bible, and that so many despise that precious book ! but

There are those who
altitude, and who are
at every thing that
happiness.

Thus found, Shaphan
was deeply affected
he could not but
the wrath of the
of the land, because
and, as contained in
n obeyed by their
es on the occasion,
ified great alarm or
e of his great men
s, to inquire of the
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to whom she re-
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re them to under-

stand, should experience the judgments of God for their iniquities, but as for himself, because his heart was tender, and he had humbled himself before the Lord, therefore he should be brought to his grave in peace, and not see the evils that were coming. O how blessed the righteous are! God will take care of them, whatever evils he may bring upon the earth. Observe also the blessings of a humble spirit; the Lord notices it, and such as possess it shall at last enter into everlasting peace.

Josiah took care to call together his people to the temple of the Lord, that they might hear the words of the book of the law, which he caused Hilkiah the high priest to read to them, thereby showing, like a good king, his care for the spiritual welfare of the people over whom he ruled.





*Behold the City all in flames,
The King they take, and bring in chains
To Babylon: with their choice hoard,
And captives, which escap'd the sword*

THE TEMPLE DESTROYED.

BEFORE CHRIST 588 YEARS.

So long protected Israel's host
At last God's powerful care have lost !
The Tribes are into slavery driven,
Jerusalem is to plunder given.

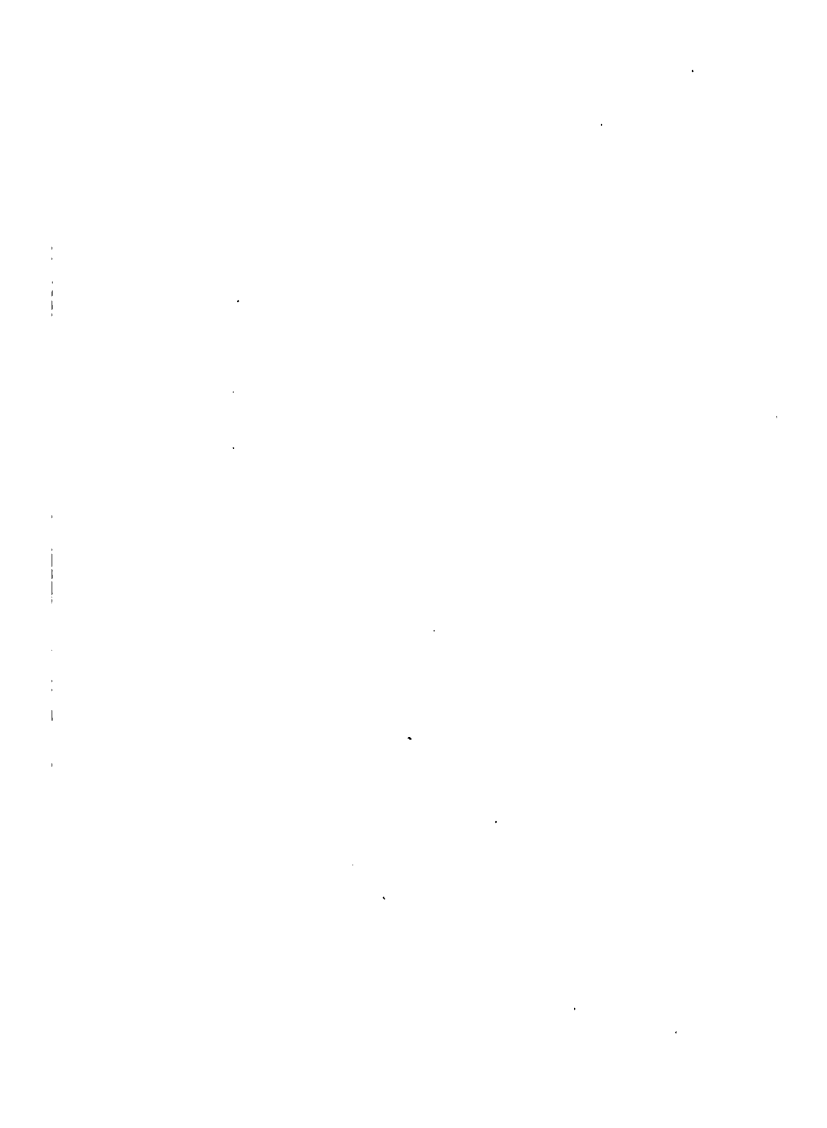
WE read in the 17th chapter of the 2d book of Kings, an account of the captivity of the ten tribes, that is, the kingdom of Israel. The Lord had long borne with them; their idolatry was that which so much displeased him, and for which he caused their enemies to triumph over them, and carry them away. It was about two hundred and fifty years since the ten tribes revolted from the house of David; their kings in general were exceedingly wicked. The one that now reigned was Hoshea, who was tributary to the king of Assyria; but

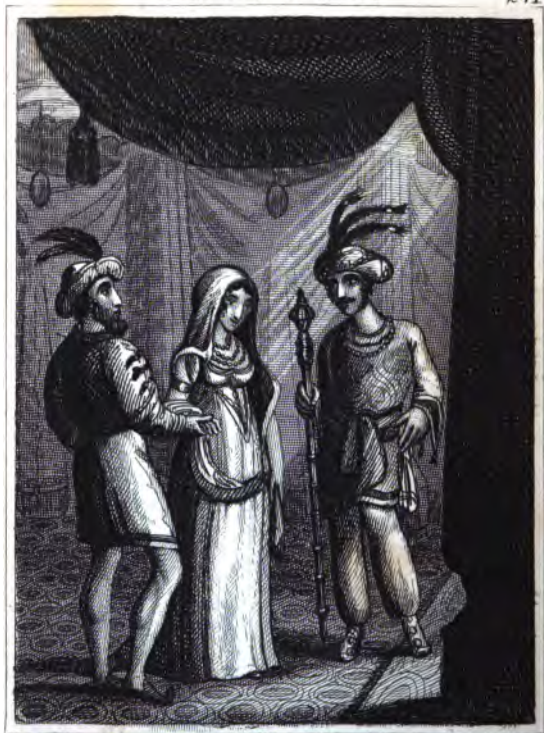
having formed a conspiracy to shake off the yoke, which reached the ears of the king of Assyria, he besieged Samaria, the capital of Israel, and after three years took the city; Hoshea became his prisoner, and the people his captives, whom he carried into Assyria, whereby they lost all their possessions, and became slaves.

They would not serve God, so he put them into the hands of those that dealt hardly with them; they despised his easy service, and now he made them to feel the heavy yoke of a victorious conqueror. We do not find that the people whom the king of Assyria carried away, ever returned again; he displaced them by sending some of his own people into the land; and thus Israel was brought to an end, as respects its being a separate government. What misery has sin brought into the world! how great the

destruction which has always attended it ! It overturns kingdoms, ruins families, and makes God our enemy. In 2d Kings xxiii. 27 we read the following affecting passage ; *“And the Lord said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I removed Israel.”* Accordingly we find in chapter xxv. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came, and all his host, and pitched against Jerusalem ; while the siege lasted, the famine dreadfully prevailed ; at length the enemy got possession of the city. Zedekiah, king of Judah, fled, but was overtaken ; his sons were slain before his face ; his eyes were then put out, he was bound in fetters of brass, and carried to Babylon ; the temple, which had stood more than four hundred years, was burnt, the city was laid in ashes, the wall were demolished, and the people were carried to Babylon.

Thus we see desolation brought by sin upon the Lord's favourite people. About eight hundred and fifty years they had been in possession of this land; God had watched graciously over them, no nation was ever so favoured, and no people ever revolted more; till at length divine patience gave way to divine wrath, and they were made to feel that rod which they had long deserved. But the Lord did not altogether forsake Judah, they were only confined seventy years in Babylon, where they were cured of their idolatry; they then were allowed to return to their land again. Cyrus, king of Persia, having obtained possession of Babylon, was inclined to let the Jews go out of captivity, of which they availed themselves; and having returned, they rebuilt the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem, as we read in the book of Ezra.





*Esther in artless beauty shone:
She was presented to the throne;
The royal favor soon she gain'd.
And in the room of Vashti reign'd.*

ESTHER IS MADE QUEEN.**BEFORE CHRIST 514 YEARS.**

To grace the feast Ahasuerus sends,
And asks the presence of his queen ;
But she no due obedience lends,
And will not with his guests be seen,

THERE is in the book of Esther a great deal that is entertaining and instructive. When the Jews availed themselves of the clemency of Cyrus, king of Persia, to return to their own land after seventy years of captivity in Babylon, many of them remained behind in the land of the heathens, and it is to such that the book of Esther chiefly refers.

This short narrative, comprised in the book under this title, is supposed to have

been written by Mordecai, a Jew, who is a leading character in the history. In the first chapter, we are told that Ahasuerus, the king of Persia, who reigned over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, even from India unto Ethiopia, made a great feast for all his princes and his servants, when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty; this feast lasted for many days, and was partaken of both by small and great: at the same time a feast was also made by Vashti, the queen. There is a pretty remark in the eighth verse, that none were compelled to drink more than suited their pleasure; which is a reproof to those who delight to press others to drink till their reason is lost, and they become fools. How contemptible do men look when thus deprived of their senses! how does it debase human nature!

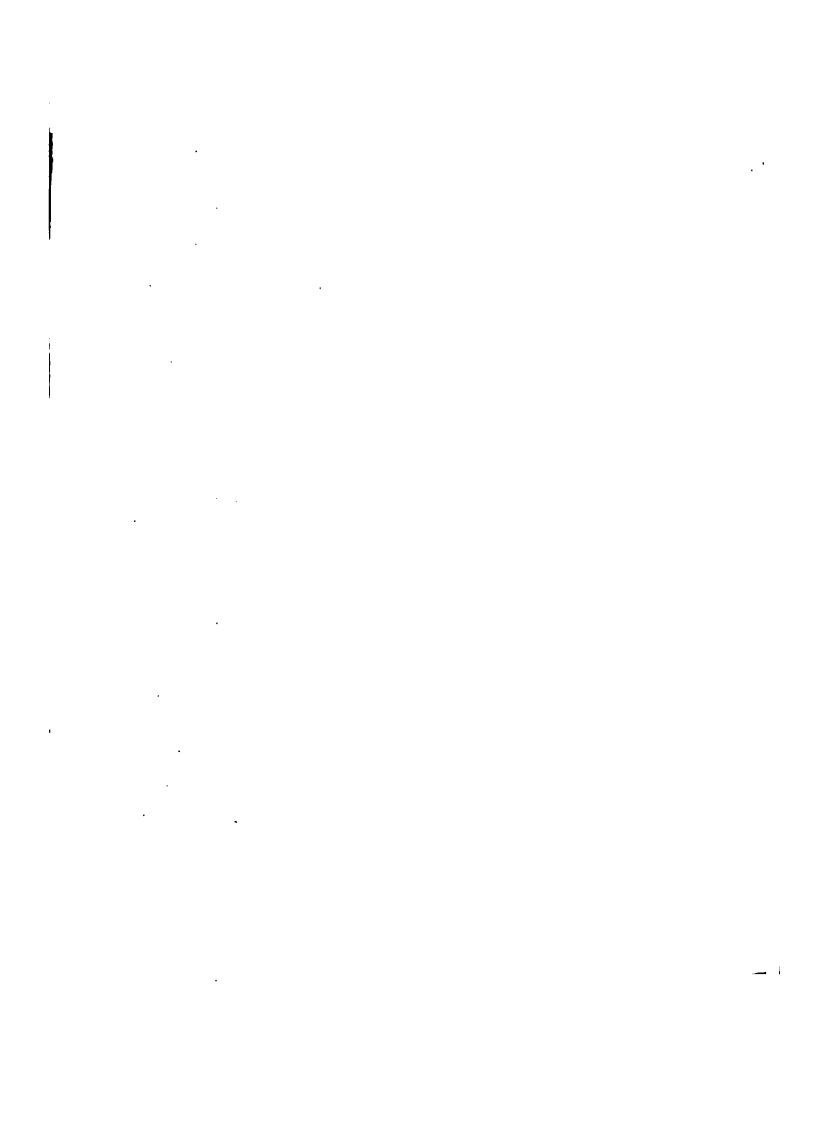
But this is the least part of the evil ; drunkenness is a sin hateful in the sight of God, and one of those sins that exclude men from the enjoyment of heaven ; (see Galatians v. 21.) it therefore becomes christians to guard against such a crime.

We find that this great and splendid feast of Ahasuerus was interrupted by an act of folly on his part : when he was merry with wine, he ordered that queen Vashti should be brought in, that his great men might see how beautiful a woman she was ; but she refused to come, which excited the king's rage, and, with the advice of his wise men, he put her away from being his wife, for her disobedience. It was considered an act of contempt on the part of the queen, and that it might be brought forward as an example by those who avail themselves of the bad conduct of the great,

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as a pattern to go by ; yet it would seem a harsh measure on the part of the king : but God, who sees all the ways of men, and is pleased to make their folly useful for his own wise purposes, overruled this event for the good of the Jews, inasmuch as Esther, a captive Jewess, the cousin of Mordecai, who “ *had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful, whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter,*” (chapter ii. 7,) was taken into the favour of the king, and became queen instead of Vashti. “ *And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her.*” (verse 15.)

Esther was thus exalted by the all-wise providence of God, who doeth what he will in “*the armies of heaven, and among the children of men.*”





*Mordecai untouch'd by awe;
The royal favorite daily saw,
With solemn stiffness on his brow,
Nor would he condescend to bow,*

MORDECAI REFUSETH HAMAN.

BEFORE CHRIST 510 YEARS.

And Haman swore replete with ire,
And vow'd that Israel's blood should flow :
But Heaven averts the purpose dire,
And works the schemer's overthrow.

WE read in the third chapter of the book of Esther, that king Ahasuerus promoted Haman the Agagite or Amalekite, (Agag was the name of the princes of Amalek,) and set him above all the king's servants, and commanded that all should reverence him; but Mordecai would not pay this favourite of the king the respect that was showed him by others.

This conduct of Mordecai was noticed and reproved by those about him, and was observed by Haman himself, who was

greatly enraged; and thinking it would but ill gratify his revenge to destroy Mordecai alone, he determined to cut off all the Jews that were in the kingdom, because they were of the same nation as Mordecai. It does not appear to have arisen from pride, that Mordecai would not pay the respect to Haman that was required; but knowing him to be a very bad character, and therefore undeserving of honour, and remembering also, that the Amalekites were a people devoted to God's wrath, he could not conscientiously give him honour. (see Exodus xvii. 16, and Deuteronomy xx. 17.)

Haman having conceived a hatred to the Jews at large, and being so great a favourite with Ahasuerus as to be able to obtain what he wanted, gained permission to have them all cut off on a certain day,

and letters to that effect were sent to all the men in authority in the various provinces under the control of Ahasuerus. When Mordecai heard of this rash and cruel determination, he rent his clothes, put on sackcloth with ashes, and cried aloud: and this sorrow became universal among the Jews.

Esther not knowing the edict that had gone forth, nor the cause for the sorrow that she understood Mordecai gave way to, sent to know the reason, and received information from him, also a charge that she should appear in the presence of the king, and intercede for her own people; but at first she feared to do this, as it was death to any one to approach the king's person without permission; yet at length, she determined to seek admission to the throne, even though

she should lose her life, and there endeavour to save the nation; but being a good woman, she desired Mordecai to hold a fast among the Jews, which she would also observe; and by thus looking up to God, and entreating his favour, endeavour to obtain that success which none but He could afford in this time of need.

Herein Esther has set us a good example; in all our troubles we should seek the Lord, and whatever we engage in, first ask his blessing; he alone can send us prosperity; and if we begin every thing by prayer, we have good reason to hope we shall ere long have to go to Him again with the voice of praise and thanksgiving, as Esther had, and which we shall see as we proceed with this instructive narrative.



*Now let himself the pleasure taste:
And this high honour be his last!
Commands the King. The guards attend,
And thus proud Haman found his end.*

HAMAN HANGED.

BEFORE CHRIST 510 YEARS.

Presumptuous man thy hopes are vain,
For thus the Fates decree,—
That honor Mordecai shall gain,
And thou, the gallows tree.

THE distress of Esther having been made known to God, she sought his protection, and went into the presence of Ahasuerus, who promised to grant her request; to which she replied, that she entreated to have his company, and that of Haman, at a banquet. When they were assembled, the king repeated his promise, to do for her what she desired; and Esther obtained his word that he would partake of another feast, accompanied by Haman, the next day.

Haman went away, elated with joy and

pride that he should thus be honoured by Esther, but he little thought how near his disgrace and death were. On returning to his family he boasted of his greatness, and the wonderful respect that was shown him by Queen Esther; yet he owned that all this availed him nothing so long as Mordecai was living; hereupon his wife and friends advised him to have a high gibbet raised, and obtain an order from the king to have Mordecai hanged thereon. He was so pleased with the idea, that he had the gibbet erected, little suspecting he was setting it up for himself, as was actually the case.

On that night the king could not sleep, and he commanded the journals of his reign to be read to him; when it appeared that Mordecai had once discovered a plot against the king, for which he had not been

rewarded; (chapter vi.) The king therefore designed that some acknowledgment should be made to Mordecai; and Haman coming before him in the morning, Ahasuerus asked him what should be done to the man whom the king delighted to honour. Haman, vainly thinking this must refer to himself, advised that he should be conveyed in great pomp through the streets of the city; this pleased the king, and he desired Haman to go and do as he had proposed to Mordecai the Jew.

Never was pride so humbled, never was a lofty creature more degraded! He was anxious to get him hanged; but he was the unintentional means of promoting him to great honour. After this, the king and Haman went to Esther's feast, when she informed him that Haman had wickedly

designed the murder of the Jews : this excited the king's anger ; and being informed of the gibbet which Haman had set up for Mordecai, the king ordered Haman himself to be hanged thereon. (Esther vii. 9, 10.)

Then was Mordecai raised to great honour ; the Jews had liberty given them to act in their own defence, when they slew many that aimed to cut them off, (chapter ix.) which they celebrated by an annual festival in commemoration of the event. In this book we see that God, by his gracious providence, orders all things well for his people ; that he is a God who hears and answers prayer ; that pride and wickedness are the ruin of thousands ; and that the way to be safe is to live in the love and fear of the Lord.



*Then Job the awful silence broke;
(He in the depth of anguish spoke)
And in the most pathetic strains
Of his prodigious woe complains.*

JOB'S AFFLICTION.

In meek submission Job receives
The chastening rod of Heaven;—
For every sad privation grieves,
From every bliss is driven.

THE Scriptures do not inform us at what period of time Job lived, or by whom the history of him was written. The account given of him, is thus introduced: "*There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was perfect and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil.*" By this we perceive that he was a good man, that he hated sin, and loved holiness, and in this respect stands as our example and pattern.

His family was large, for he had ten children, and his possessions were very extensive; so much so, that he was the greatest of all the men of the east. But did his piety

or his affluence save him from trials ? No, for few men were ever more tried than Job was ; he proved that “ *Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but that the Lord delivereth him out of them all.* ” (Psalm xxxiv. 19.)

The devil, who hates the upright, and watches if it were possible to destroy them, obtained permission from God to try Job, and he spared no pains to afflict him ; and one calamity followed so quick upon another, that had not Job been blessed with a large measure of divine grace, he would have been tempted to follow the wicked advice of his wife, who counselled him to “ *curse God and die.* ” (chapter ii. 9.) His oxen, asses, and camels were stolen from him ; his servants slain, his sheep were destroyed by fire, and his ten children were all buried in the ruins of the house where

they were feasting. All this painful intelligence reached him in quick succession ; his troubles did not come alone ; and so severe were the effects of his great afflictions, that his friends, who came to console him under his sufferings, could not speak to him for seven days. But what was his conduct ?

After the pious man had heard all the evils related, *“ he arose and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped ; and said Naked I came out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither ; the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord.”* (chap. i. 20, 21.)

Here was patience, here was submission : the Lord give us grace to learn of Job to submit to all his will and pleasure with becoming humility and resignation.

After this, Satan obtained permission to afflict his body ; and he smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto the crown of his head. (chapter ii. 17.) Here also we have reason to admire his patience ; but Job was not a sinless man : in a moment of deep distress he cursed the day of his birth ; (chapter iii.) But God did not cast off his servant for this infirmity : no ; after he had allowed Satan to try him long and severely, he was pleased to restore him, and to make his latter end prosperous. “ *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. He also shall be my salvation.*” (chapter xiii. 15, 16.) “ *So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning. Job lived an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons’ sons, even four generations.*” (chapter xlii. 12, 16.)



*The haughty monarch in his pride
Comes to the flaming furnace side;
To see the raging fires fulfil,
The cruel dictates of his will.*

THE FIERY FURNACE.

BEFORE CHRIST 587 YEARS.

Within the fierce and fervid glow
Three holy men are thrown ;
And thence return unhurt, to show
Their God is God alone !

WE read in the third chapter of the Book of Daniel that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, made an image of gold, sixty cubits high, which he set up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon ; and commanded that on hearing the sound of music, all his people should fall down and worship the golden image. *“And whoso falleth not down and worshipping, shall at the same hour be cast into the midst of a fiery furnace.”* (verse 6.) Babylon was an idolatrous country ; and here we see the king of the land encouraging and commanding his

subjects to observe such abominable vanities.

What a mercy it is to dwell in a land where the true God is worshipped: where those in authority are the friends of true religion, and wish every one to act as his conscience dictates; we cannot be too thankful for such blessed privileges; and the people of Great Britain may enjoy them to the fullest extent.

Although Nebuchadezzar found his own people willing to obey his wicked command, and to pay adoration to a lifeless god, there were certain captive Jews who despised the king's command, and would not bow down to the idol, knowing they ought to obey the Lord God rather than man. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, three young men, Jews of the tribe of Judah, who were brought unto Babylon,

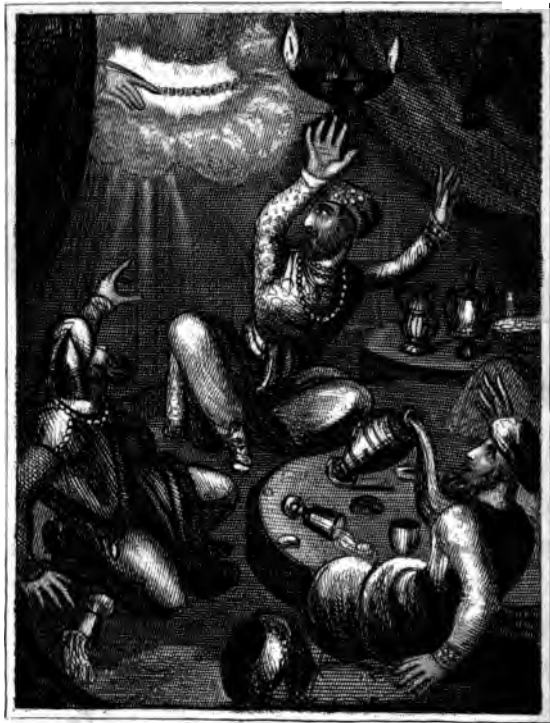
refused to worship the golden image, of which an account was brought to the king, who ordered them to comply with his edict, and if they did not, they should be thrown into a burning fiery furnace. This threat did not make them afraid; they were resolved to worship none but the true God, whom they believed could deliver them; and so they told the king, who was filled with fury against them, and commanded that the furnace should be heated seven times more than it was wont to be heated, and he ordered some of "*the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace;*" in obeying this command, the soldiers perished by the intense heat of the fire, while those who were thrown into the flames were unhurt; the king perceiving this while wit-

nessing the execution of his sentence, was astonished, and rose up in haste, exclaiming, "*Did not we cast three men bound, into the midst of the fire? lo, I see four men loose, walking therein unhurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God!*" (verse 24, 25.) He then called them out of the furnace, and they came forth unhurt.

Observe how the Almighty has all things under his control; when the Israelites passed through the Red Sea, the waters did not overflow them; when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were in the fiery furnace, the fire did not burn them. With what safety then may we venture on any work pleasing in the sight of God! O then let us determine to be on the Lord's side, for he will keep and preserve his own, notwithstanding the rage and fury of wicked men.

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*Amidst the riot and the noise,
A strange appearance check'd their joys
Against the plaster of the wall
An hand and pen surpris'd them all.*

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST.

BEFORE CHRIST 538 YEARS.

At the banquet a hand is seen
To write against the wall,—
“*Mene, Tekel, Upharin,*”
Denoting Belshazzar's fall!

KING Belshazzar made a great feast to entertain a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before them : and when his heart was merry, he sent for the vessels of gold and silver which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple at Jerusalem ; and Belshazzar, his princes, and wives, and concubines drank in them, and praised the gods of gold and silver.

The conduct of this wicked king, in turning the vessels of God's temple to such

a use was an affront to the Most High ! and how thoughtless was his conduct, for at this time Babylon was besieged by Cyrus, king of Persia ; but Belshazzar considered himself secure from his enemy's reach, little thinking how soon he was to fall. And, alas ! it has been remarked, that the nearer men are to ruin, the more unconcerned they often appear, because hardened in sin, and given over to infatuation

While this impious feast was going on, a sudden gloom was cast over their enjoyments by the appearance of a man's fingers, which wrote certain unintelligible words upon the wall of the palace ; and though Belshazzar could not read what was written, his conscience apprised him it was something which related to himself ; his countenance changed, his thoughts troubled him, the joints of his loins were loosed, and

his knees smote one against another: thus God has all hearts in his hand; and when sinners seem most secure, he can turn their sweets into bitterness, and fill their souls with dismay.

Under the influence of these awful visitations, Belshazzar sent for the wise men, who could not interpret the words on the wall; but Daniel having been mentioned to the king as being able to make known the meaning of visions, and to explain hard sentences, he was sent for, and gave Belshazzar to understand that "*God had numbered his kingdom, and finished it; that he was weighed in the balances, and found wanting; and that his kingdom should be given to the Medes and Persians.*" (Daniel v. 26, 27, 28.) These were awful tidings to a man who was living in the midst of luxury and sin; he had been indulging in

excess, and now God was going to call him to account. O that sinners would attend to this solemn narrative ! in the midst of their unlawful enjoyments the anger of the Lord is hanging over them, and ere they are aware may perhaps plunge them into endless woe.

In that very night was Belshazzar slain ; for Cyrus, king of Persia, obtained possession of Babylon ; and Darius, the Mede, who accompanied Cyrus against the city, was made king in Belshazzar's stead. Little did the king and the inhabitants of this place think their enemy would ever gain possession of the kingdom, for the river Euphrates was a protection to it, and there was plenty of provision in the place ; but that did not prevent their downfall, when the Almighty would punish them for their wickedness.

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*The Lions tho, starving for meat,
The pious old Prophet revere;
Submissive they stand at his feet;
Good Daniel refuses to fear.*

DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN.**BEFORE CHRIST 537 YEARS.**

Into the den of Lions cast
Daniel on Heaven depends ;
And God, of gracious power and vast,
His prophet there defends.

DARIUS having obtained possession of Babylon, he set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty princes ; and over these he set three presidents, and Daniel at the head of them. Daniel had been greatly promoted by Belshazzar, when he explained the handwriting on the wall ; (Daniel v. 29.) and it bespoke the wisdom of Darius in placing so good a man at the head of the public affairs.

Daniel was a captive Jew ; he was a truly pious character, and employed by the

Almighty as a prophet. Thus the Lord made him a blessing in the house of his bondage, and blessed him with his favour and presence. But Daniel had his enemies ; as great men often have, because of their exalted stations, and as good men have, because the wicked hate the righteous. The great men over whom he was placed, were very anxious to find some fault in him, which might bring him into disgrace with the king ; but they were obliged to acknowledge their inability to lay any thing to his charge, unless it was concerning the law of his God.

There was no fault in Daniel, but that he was pious and prayed unto the Lord. They therefore endeavoured to entangle him in this, and prevailed on the king to sign a decree, that whosoever should ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days,

except of Darius, should be cast into a den of lions.

Daniel heard that this decree was signed ; he nevertheless went as usual into his chamber three times a day, and called upon his God, regardless of the cruel law which had lately passed. His non-compliance with the king's command was soon known to his enemies, and reported to the king, who was obliged to comply with the tenor of the law, and therefore ordered Daniel to be cast into the den of lions. But God was pleased to preserve him safe from their fury ; and he came forth unhurt, to the joy of Darius, who much prized him, and was grieved, at the unhappy necessity he had laid upon himself by publishing such a wicked decree ; and the king gave orders that those who had thus persecuted Daniel, should be cast into the same den, where

they all met with the fate that they had planned for this faithful servant of the true God.

Thus they that digged a pit for others fell into it themselves, and were made to know that there is a God who ruleth on high, and who will preserve those that love and serve him faithfully.

One word may be here said as regards private prayer: three times a day Daniel retired to his chamber to call in secret upon the Lord: may his good example be followed. My dear youthful readers, think much of prayer, of private devotion; the soul cannot prosper without it; God has promised to hear it; and as you regard your present and future peace, let me persuade you to attend to the advice of your blessed Saviour, given in his gospel in the 6th chapter of St. Matthew.

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*When Jonah sunk beneath the wave
He thought to rise no more;
But God prepar'd a fish to save,
And bear him to the shore.*

JONAH CAST INTO THE SEA.

BEFORE CHRIST 840 YEARS.

The disobedient prophet sleeps
Far on the stormy sea ;
His is the guilt, he wakes and weeps,—
“The cause behold in me.”

“NOW the word of the Lord came unto Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness is come up before me.” (Jonah 1.) This was Jonah’s commission, given him by the great God himself, and was it obeyed with promptitude? Quite the contrary, for Jonah, instead of repairing to Nineveh, fled from his work, and took ship to sail far away from

the place to which he was sent; but it was in vain for him to fly from the living God, and he soon knew it, for the Lord sent a great wind, and raised a mighty tempest in the sea, and the ship had like to have been lost. While this storm raged, Jonah was below in the ship asleep, and the ship-master roused him with these solemn words, "*What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.*" Such language was well suited to this occasion, and what had need be addressed to us all. Poor sinners as we are, dead in trespasses and sins, had need be thus alarmed; and even the Lord's people require quickening very often in the way. When they had roused Jonah, they cast lots, to see for whose cause this storm now troubled them: the lot fell upon Jonah, who told

them he had run away from the service of God, and that for his sake the tempest was sent ; he therefore desired them to cast him into the sea, and there would be a calm, "*for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.*" This was, though reluctantly consented to. And when Jonah was thrown over-board, the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow him, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights ; from that wretched abode he called upon God, who heard him, and caused the fish to vomit him upon the dry land. Thus in the midst of judgment the Lord remembered mercy, and has given us encouragement, in whatever situation it may be our lot to be placed, to pray fervently unto him, and he will hear us, and pardon us if we sincerely repent of our sins. Again the Lord sent Jonah to Ni-

neveh; (chapter iii.) now he obeyed, and entering into that great city, warned the people of their impending danger; and they repented, and turned to God with fasting, who spared them for his mercy's sake: but this lenity displeased Jonah, and he was angry because the Lord had not fulfilled his prophecy. Alas, how frequently the most pious men fall! He ought rather to have rejoiced at their repentance, and adored the patience and long suffering of God. May the Lord God Almighty keep us by his grace, and enable us to rejoice at the dispensations of his mercy, and never to murmur at his gracious dealings, either with ourselves or others.

